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## **WAZIRISTAN, 1919–1920**



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# CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR LESSONS

EDITED BY MAJOR-GENERAL SIR CHARLES CALLWELL, K.C.B.

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## WAZIRISTAN, 1919-1920

BY

H. de WATTEVILLE, B.A.(OXON), p.s.c.

*Formerly Exhibitioner of Christ Church, Oxford, late Lieutenant-Colonel,  
Royal Artillery and General Staff*



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TO  
BRIGADIER-GENERAL J. E. EDMONDS,  
C.B., C.M.G.,  
IN TOKEN OF LONG-STANDING FRIENDSHIP  
AND REGARD THIS LITTLE ATTEMPT  
AT WRITING MILITARY HISTORY  
IS, BY KIND PERMISSION,  
DEDICATED



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It may seem rash for one who has never served on the North-Western Frontier of India to embark on a description of warfare in those parts. Much generous advice and assistance from some who have a better right to express opinions on these events have alone enabled the writer to venture on a description of this campaign. It is with regret, therefore, that the author is debarred from expressing his full indebtedness to all those to whom his sincere thanks are due.

From Lieutenant-General Sir George MacMunn, K.C.B., K.C.I.E., D.S.O., and Lieutenant-Colonel H. de L. Walters, C.M.G., D.S.O., valuable help has also been forthcoming; whilst to an old friend of Staff College days, who desires to remain anonymous, may be attributed the tedious task of the revision of the proofs of this volume.

The author's thanks are also due to the Air Ministry for permission to reproduce photographs actually taken during operations.





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## GLOSSARY

OF PUSHTOO WORDS POSSESSING A TOPOGRAPHICAL OR OTHER  
SIGNIFICANCE; MOST OF THESE OCCUR IN PLACE-NAMES  
MENTIONED IN THIS VOLUME

Algad	.	.	.	Watercourse.
China	.	.	.	Spring.
Daman	.	.	.	Flat country at foot of hills.
Dara	.	.	.	Valley.
Ghar	.	.	.	Mountain peak.
Ghāra	.	.	.	Ridge.
Ghash	.	.	.	Chasm.
Ghundai	.	.	.	Knoll.
Jihad	.	.	.	Holy War (is not a true Pushtoo word).
Jirga	.	.	.	Tribal assembly.
Kach (or kats)	.	.	.	Alluvial flat along a river.
Khasadar	.	.	.	Pathan militiaman.
Khel	.	.	.	Tribal section.
Khwar (khuara, khor)	.	.	.	Ravine.
Kirri	.	.	.	Encampment of nomads.
Konr	.	.	.	Rock.
Kot	.	.	.	Walled village.
Kotal	.	.	.	Pass.
Lashkar	.	.	.	Tribal levy of over 200 men.
Luta	.	.	.	Peak.
Malik	.	.	.	Elder, representative.
Manda	.	.	.	Rivulet.
Mulla	.	.	.	Holy man learned in the scriptures of Islam.
Nala (or nullah)	.	.	.	A small ravine or hollow.
Narai	.	.	.	Pass.
Oba	.	.	.	Water.

Palosi	.	.	.	Babul tree ( <i>Acacia modesta</i> ).
Pir	.	.	.	Saint.
Powinda	.	.	.	Nomad.
Raghza (rogha)	.	.	.	Plateau overlooking a valley.
Sangar	.	.	.	Stone breastwork.
Sar	.	.	.	Heat.
Sāra (sora)	.	.	.	Cold.
Shin	.	.	.	Green.
Spin	.	.	.	White.
Star	.	.	.	Big.
Sur	.	.	.	Red.
Tangi	.	.	.	Defile.
Taud	.	.	.	Warm.
Toi	.	.	.	Stream (dwa toi—junction of two streams).
Tor	.	.	.	Black.
Wana	.	.	.	Tree.
Waru	.	.	.	Wazir term for kats.
Wuch	.	.	.	Dry.
Zam	.	.	.	River.
Zhawar	.	.	.	A ravine.

# CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR LESSONS

## WAZIRISTAN

### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTORY

**The Waziristan Campaign and aftermath of the Great War.**—It was but natural that the Great War should manifest itself by some repercussion on the North-West Frontier of India. Among all semi-independent border tribes the drain of good troops from that country must have aroused much speculation as to the permanence of British rule in Hindustan. Such thoughts could act only as an incentive to lawless spirits—and along the Frontier these are many—to indulge in those more daring depredations upon which, at other times, they would hesitate to venture. Then, later in 1917, after the rise of the Soviet Republic in Russia, there came another active irritant, quite sufficient in itself to cause unrest. Anti-British propaganda by the Bolshevik Government of Moscow extended into Afghanistan and even across the River Indus. Fortunately, the Amir of Afghanistan stood firm, and no incursion into Indian “administered” territory by Afghan or Pathan raiders occurred on any considerable scale until well after the Armistice of 1918 had been proclaimed in Europe. Indeed, it proved a welcome charac-

teristic of the Oriental that he should thus wait or "sit upon the fence" until the golden opportunity had vanished. Accordingly, the tribes remained generally quiescent. In 1917, it is true, it was found necessary to organize a punitive expedition in order to deal with the Mahsuds of Waziristan, yet this did not prove either a serious or lengthy business. It was, therefore, not until May, 1919, that an outburst of Afghan enmity involved the Indian Army in operations of truly major importance.

The outbreak of that Third Afghan War then came with a suddenness which was truly dramatic. Throughout the Great War the Amir Habibullah Khan, following the example of his father, Abdur Rahman Khan, had remained friendly to British interests and loyal to all his engagements. The tranquillity of the frontier during these years may thus be attributed to the manner in which Habibullah observed the pledges of friendship which had been exchanged with the Government of India. His wholehearted abstention from all anti-British intrigue among the border tribes during the difficult years of the Great War can only redound to his everlasting credit. But in the spring of 1919 Habibullah was assassinated during his sleep. Then, after a brief interlude of turmoil, his son, Amanullah Khan, succeeded to the Afghan throne. This succession was very shortly to lead to a total change in Afghan politics. Rejecting the position of dependence on the Government of India which had formed the essence of the foreign policy pursued by his father and grandfather before him, the young Amir forthwith adopted an attitude of pronounced hostility to British rule in India. Early in May, 1919, his conceit led him to commit definite acts of war. The Wazirs and Mahsuds, always sensitive to the slightest movement amongst their Afghan neighbours against British interests, were not slow to react to the

stimulus that they were now to receive from Kabul. The Waziristan Campaign of 1919-20 thus came as a natural sequel to the fighting on the Afghan borders. Though forced upon the Government of India by the outbreaks of the lawless hillmen, it was, in its essence, little more than an aftermath of the Great War.

***The situation in India in 1919.***—*The situation in India* during the early part of 1919 is best illustrated from the despatch of the Commander-in-Chief in India, dated 1st November, 1919. The standard of military preparation in India, so it is there said, was "regulated by the instructions of the War Committee of the Cabinet, received through the Secretary of State for India in 1916, viz. that operations on the Indian Frontier were to be of a defensive nature, and that should the offensive be forced upon us, it was to be strictly limited in scope. The Field Army . . . had necessarily suffered from the demands made upon it . . . for overseas theatres, and this had to a certain extent affected its efficiency\* ; moreover, many of its best qualified officers were serving out of India. . . . Thus the signing of the Armistice in November, 1918, found India grappling with the problem of meeting urgent demands on her greatly reduced resources. Then came the demand for demobilization. . . . This necessitated a considerable reduction in establishments. . . . Lastly, the outbreak of internal disturbances supervened in April, 1919 . . . when it was found necessary to divert large bodies of troops from their usual peace stations, to retain others awaiting demobilization . . . to recall a large number of Indian troops who had proceeded to their homes on leave." The consequences of this state of affairs were to hamper very considerably the Government's liberty of action along the entire North-West Frontier.

\* This is a very mild statement of the case.



Although active operations against the Afghans lasted less than one month, the military situation still appeared so clouded that adequate measures could not be taken to deal with the Mahsuds and Wazirs until the approach of winter.

Nevertheless, the ultimate reasons for thus delaying the beginning of military operations in Waziristan lay deeper, although very simple and resulting in themselves from the circumstances described above. In the first place, India had been drained almost dry of troops sufficiently highly trained to undertake a difficult mountain expedition. Demobilization had depleted the British troops of all acclimatized units. The Indian Army, called upon to maintain large garrisons overseas and thus deprived of its best troops, was left with battalions composed virtually of untrained men, commanded by officers sadly lacking in general experience and, still more, in any familiarity with mountain warfare. Even among the best of such troops as were available for a frontier campaign the need for granting furlough—a perpetual difficulty in India—to men who had not enjoyed such a privilege for many years, was growing more than urgent. Secondly, the entire transport resources of the Indian Army had remained immobilized by the Afghan War and by its consequences. Until the autumn there existed, in fact, no choice but to wait. Even this was not all; down to the close of the year the state of the relations existing between India and Afghanistan demanded caution, while throughout the summer grave anxiety had been occasioned by many symptoms of unrest in India itself. To these many and serious obstacles standing in the way of despatching a large expedition into Waziristan must be added financial considerations. Army Headquarters were thus fully occupied in meeting current difficulties. A more unfortunate moment could not have

been selected for launching a serious frontier expedition than the summer of 1919, so it was postponed until the winter. Even then circumstances were to remain, in many respects, no more favourable to the success of the undertaking, while the delay had only served to embolden the tribes. It must not be imagined that such conditions can be ascribed to lack of foresight or of sagacity on the part of the Government of India or of the Commander-in-Chief and his staff. Far from it; since the day that Sir Charles Monro had arrived to take over the high command in India in 1916, he had deliberately, and with the greatest courage, advocated the policy of denuding India of troops, armament, supplies and transport in order to carry on the various campaigns in which the Indian Army was involved.

**The characteristics of the campaign.**—The operations of 1919–20 in Waziristan presented several features which differentiate that campaign from previous frontier warfare. In the first place, the enterprise proved—to quote the words used by the Commander-in-Chief in India in his official despatch of 1st August, 1920—“of unparalleled hard fighting and severity. The enemy fought with a determination and courage which has rarely, if ever, been met with by our troops in similar operations. The character of the terrain, combined with trying and arduous climatic conditions, alone presented difficulties before which the most hardened troops might well have hesitated.” To a very great extent this statement is literally true and justified, but such language should not be permitted to obscure the outstanding fact that the campaign proved so arduous mainly because the available troops were unprepared for this type of warfare. Previous expeditions had on four occasions passed through Waziristan over the same ground, and, indeed, at the same time of year.

But these campaigns had been fought by skilled and experienced troops ; never had terrain or climate alone so nearly brought an expedition to grief as was to happen at the close of 1919. The campaign under review fully illustrates the grave risk of embarking on such enterprises with raw and inadequately trained forces, however well equipped they may be. In the second place, the campaign witnessed the employment, for the first time in frontier warfare, of aeroplanes on any large scale, of mountain howitzers and of certain other products of the Great War in Europe. The tactics employed by the invading force are, in two other important respects, of considerable interest. But before proceeding to discuss the course of the campaign as a whole or of its incidents in detail, it is essential to consider very briefly the political problem that lay behind the operations of the troops. and so to realize how far those factors affected the policy of the Government or influenced the course of action adopted by the leaders of the expedition.

**The history of Waziristan.**—Waziristan, with its lawless population, had for the past seventy years constituted a running sore on the North-West Frontier : in fact, almost ever since the British annexation of that region in 1849. The policy of the Indian Government was, both at that time and subsequently, one of non-interference with the tribes. Nevertheless, the great obstacle standing in the way of the fulfilment of this policy was the pretension of the Amir of Afghanistan to some definite, legal, form of sovereignty over a great part, at least, of Waziristan. The Government of India, however, was content to allow this question to rest on the understanding that the various Wazir and Mahsud tribes should look to Simla and not to Kabul for their political guidance. But that attitude involved the recognition of the right of the inhabitants of

those same districts to claim protection from the Indian Government, since the obligation in relations of this nature must be reciprocal. Accordingly, in 1890, when the trade route along the River Gumal was opened on the south borders of Waziristan, a system of Government subsidies or "allowances" was inaugurated, by which the tribes, in return for a fixed annual payment, pledged themselves to take that particular route under their protection, to abstain from raiding British-Indian territory and to perform certain minor services.

Three years later Sir Mortimer Durand visited Kabul and drew up the well-known Agreement, whereby nearly the entire district known as Waziristan was definitely recognized by the Amir as wholly subject to Indian suzerainty. The subsequent delimitation of the boundary, involved in this Agreement, established what is known as the "Durand Line," that is, the present western frontier of Waziristan and, consequently, of India with Afghanistan.\*

In 1894 the trade route along the Tochi Valley in the north of Waziristan was also opened and protected much in the same manner as was already being done in the case of the Gumal Valley route. But, in the meantime, experience had been showing that an increasing measure of military supervision was required to check raiding on the part of the tribesmen living along these valleys. The system of tribal allowances was proving an insufficient safeguard against sporadic acts of violence. To secure the trade routes, and to repress organized brigandage, several military expeditions of varying importance had been undertaken into Waziristan. At first these were of a purely punitive nature. Next they tended to become

\* It is interesting to note that at the Conference held at Mussoori in 1921 it transpired that the present Amir did not appear to hold this renunciation as binding upon himself.

more preventive. Then, as time went on, fortified posts and blockhouses were built, which were garrisoned either by local levies or by local militia raised for this duty. Originally such posts were placed at those points where the raiders might sally forth from their hills into the plains, or harry the caravans proceeding along the trade routes. By 1899, the practice had so far grown that two long, narrow strips of country, lying to the north and south of central Waziristan, along the trade routes, were garrisoned on that principle. These militia forces were officered by British military officers, equipped and maintained after a regular military pattern. Although open to objection, the system, at that period, had much to recommend it; above all, it possessed the great advantage of releasing important contingents of regular troops from idle, garrison duty in the mountains; in addition, such military employment seemed to keep the tribesmen out of mischief. It continued for some twenty years, that is, until the Afghan War of 1919. At that time there existed two such forces in Waziristan, the Northern Waziristan and Southern Waziristan Militias, together some 3000 men strong. There had also come into existence a force of locally raised "Frontier Constabulary," which was stationed in detachments of different size, mainly among the more important villages adjacent to the foothills of Waziristan. It was some 2000 men strong and officered by British police officials, but possessed no true military value. These various forces were supported by the normal garrisons of regular troops based on Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan.\*

\* It is important to distinguish between (a) the Militia organized after a regular pattern and armed by Government; (b) the irregular levies or *Khasadars*, which supplied their own arms and were controlled by their own headmen in return for a fixed monthly payment; (c) the Frontier Constabulary, a police force, which was maintained

In the early summer of 1919, after more than four years of restlessness due to the Great War, the outbreak of the Afghan War, followed by the withdrawal of the British officers and other representatives from the Upper Tochi Valley as well as from Wana, a fort near the head of the Gumal route, proved too much for the loyalty of the majority of the rank and file of the Waziristan Militias. The local elements deserted and turned against their British officers. Following on the virtual collapse of these forces, Wazir and Mahsud raiding parties went so far as to invade the border districts of Derajat and Zhob, and even penetrated into the Punjab. The conclusion of peace with Afghanistan seemed somewhat to encourage these outbreaks. Such was the state of affairs that prevailed down to the beginning of the Waziristan operations in 1919.

**The occupation of Waziristan.**—That campaign terminated in a military occupation of a great part of Waziristan. The new situation resulting therefrom was summed up by the Viceroy of India in a speech made in August, 1920, in which he stated : “ As the result of hard fighting we have occupied a central and *dominating*\* position in Waziristan. . . . For many years . . . we followed the policy of non-interference with its inhabitants. . . . We hoped that if we left them alone, they would leave us alone. This hope has, I regret to say, proved fallacious, and the time has now come when we can no longer shut our eyes to the fact. We have had a campaign, more or less important, against Waziristan on an average every four years. Since 1852 we have had seventeen of

along the administrative border, and (d) the *chighas* or emergency levies organized in many frontier villages to turn out on a “ hue and cry ” being raised : they might be compared to a species of volunteer fire brigade.

\* This qualification is hardly warranted by subsequent events.

these military operations, and since 1911 we have had four, including that just concluded. On a review of the facts we have made up our minds that this continual and gratuitous provocation can no longer be suffered ; and we have decided . . . that our forces shall remain in occupation in Central Waziristan. . . . It is not possible to set any limits to the period of our occupation, our main care being . . . that there shall be no recurrences of the series of outrages, of which I have given you an outline." The prospect of a more or less permanent occupation of Waziristan, however, was no new contingency. For various causes it had steadily been rejected before the Great War. But the trend of events from the outset of the Afghan War of 1919 could only render its fulfilment more probable every day. That such a consideration finally influenced the conduct of the operations in Waziristan admits of little doubt. It certainly ended by lifting that war above the plane of an ordinary punitive expedition.

It has been suggested that many of the military operations that have taken place in Waziristan, both in the past and in 1919-20, should and could have been avoided ; yet it is difficult to see how this might have been achieved. The interest which the Afghans have continually manifested in Waziristan is significant. A country inhabited by such restless and warlike tribes seems to invite intrigue, and therefore constitutes nothing more nor less than a standing menace to the prosperity and peace of the plains of the Indus. This was abundantly demonstrated by the events of 1919. Accordingly, the enforcement of more peaceful modes of life in Waziristan had long shown itself to be essential if India was to be considered secure against Afghan machinations among these wild people. The origin of this constantly recurring, thorny, problem might usually be traced to political or religious inspiration

originating from Kabul. Since neither political nor military considerations have ever permitted of the seemingly logical and true solution being applied to the difficulty, some compromise has always been sought to meet the case. Such compromises have found their expression in the two main policies that have now been considered and in turn enforced in the frontier districts generally and to Waziristan in particular :—

- (i) The "close border" policy that would content itself with the establishment of a strong military and police cordon, following the junction of the foothills and of the plain.
- (ii) The "forward" policy that advocates a sufficiently firm occupation of the mountainous country as far west as the Durand Line, with a view to securing thereby the tranquillity of the lowlands of the Indus Valley.

Further, in Baluchistan Sir Robert Sandeman, many years ago, had initiated and carried through yet another policy which aimed at :—

- (iii) A combination of peaceful penetration and of tribal responsibility for the maintenance of law and order ; this involving only a variation in the means of attaining the above-named policy (ii).

Lastly, advocates have been found who would recommend :—

- (iv) The abandonment of the plain lying to the west of the River Indus and a defensive occupation of the left bank of that river.

Political and military, no less than humanitarian, objections can be adduced against each of these courses. Neither is



any one, perhaps, capable of universal application. Above all, remains the weighty reason that not one of them will of itself solve in a lasting or satisfactory manner the problem of the relations of India with Afghanistan. In addition, the difficulties in the way of "occupying" and disarming a large mountainous region like Waziristan, if expressed in terms of military precautions, might prove prohibitive. The tribesmen, moreover, would always possess the opportunity of disappearing into Afghan territory and returning for purposes of pillage and of raid. Among military obstacles must also be named the fear that service in an inaccessible region like Waziristan might affect recruiting for the Indian Army, on the ground that distance and consequent expense of travel would prevent the Indian soldier from visiting his home in the plains. This latter fact would, so it was believed, stand in the way of his enlistment. Nevertheless, all objections appeared to have been overcome, and in 1920 the complete occupation of Waziristan seemed in the way of becoming an accomplished fact. It was formally accepted by the Government of India as a part of a fixed policy declared in September, 1922.

**The present situation.**—Still the wild population remained untamed, and no serious attempt was, or could be, made to develop such resources as the country might be found to possess, however scanty they might be. The question of weaning the turbulent mountaineers from brigandage thus seemed unsolved, and large military forces were necessarily locked up in that remote and mountainous country. In 1923 fresh military operations became necessary in the Razmak district in the heart of Waziristan. These proved successful. Notwithstanding this fact, up to the time of writing (1925) the tribesmen still continue their depredations, although these are now

far less serious and of less frequent occurrence than before the operations of 1919-20. Neither have they molested the lowlands to any extent. From about four hundred a year the number of Wazir and Mahsud raids have decreased by over one-half. Nevertheless, the enforcement of a more peaceful means of livelihood among the tribes is far from attainment. The example of what has been achieved in other frontier districts may be adduced to encourage the belief that the Mahsud can be tamed. The pacification of Baluchistan, far from being so formidable a task as that of Waziristan, has—it is true—demonstrated the beneficent results of a well-conceived and wisely enforced policy of this nature. In other districts along the North-West Frontier similar changes are perhaps in course of realization. How far a similar process can apply in the case of the Wazirs and Mahsuds has yet to be shown: perhaps not at all.

In conclusion, it should be added that since 1922 the policy of the total occupation of Waziristan has undergone a very distinct modification. A road fit for mechanical transport has gradually been completed from Jandola and up the Tank Zam Valley, through Razmak into the Tochi Valley. A large part of the former regular garrison of Waziristan has, consequently, been withdrawn; Ladha and Wana have been evacuated. Instead of these, one brigade of Indian infantry is permanently quartered at Razmak. Accordingly, a considerable saving of regular troops was thus effected. The places of the troops have again been filled by corps of locally raised "Scouts," corresponding closely to the former Militia, and irregular levies. All these auxiliaries now number some 10,000 men. There is as yet little to show that the new formations will prove more reliable than their predecessors, but the outlook is held to be not unpromising. Money is being freely spent

among the Wazirs and Mahsuds, either as "tribal allowances," or military pay, or wages for work done on the new roads, or in return for produce sold and services rendered to the regular garrisons. How far this compromise will eventually succeed can be proved by experience alone. A definite policy with regard to Waziristan, however, has now been formulated and is being systematically applied. This circumstance alone may contribute largely towards the solution of the most difficult of the many problems presented by the North-West Frontier of India.

## CHAPTER II

### WAZIRISTAN AND ITS POPULATION

**The topography of Waziristan.**—No comprehensive grasp of the military problem under review can be attained without some preliminary, albeit slight knowledge of the geographical situation, natural characteristics and peculiarities of Waziristan, also of its inhabitants.

**Mountains.**—Waziristan is a mountainous country with ill-defined, irregular boundaries. It lies on the North-West Frontier of India, roughly between the Indus plain on its eastern or Indian side and the watershed of the Suleiman Mountains on its western or Afghan side. Except on its eastern border, Waziristan is contained in every direction by barren, inhospitable, mountainous country somewhat similar to itself. To the north it abuts on the Kohat district ; to the south it runs into the Zhob district ; to the west it marches with Afghanistan. In shape it approximates very roughly an irregular, lozenge-shaped parallelogram 160 miles in length and 60 miles in breadth. Its longer axis lies from north-east to south-west, from about Thal on the Kurram River to about the confluence of the Gumal and Kundar Rivers. Its area thus approximates some 5000 square miles ; this, to give a comparison near home, might correspond to rather more than the south-eastern counties of Kent, Sussex, Surrey and Hants, say the area bounded by a line running from Newbury to Margate in the north, thence to Hastings, so on to Bournemouth and back to Newbury. Nevertheless, the

configuration of Waziristan is such that any further comparison could only prove misleading. Its surface might bear some analogy, if it may be set beside a miniature, to the roughest parts of the English lake district round Wastwater. But the general aridity of the country and the poverty of its natural resources preclude its comparison with any part of the British Isles. The greater portion of it can best be described as a tangle of rocky and forbidding mountain ridges that run gradually in decreasing altitude southwards and eastwards from the highest peaks of the Suleiman Mountains, Pir Ghal (11,500 feet) and Shuidar (11,000 feet), these being situated near its north-west boundary. In spite of these heights there exist no glaciers nor any mountains covered with perennial snow. The whole mountainous area terminates abruptly to the east and south-east in a long face of steep, bare, rocky hill that skirts the plain of the Indus or the Derajat, there rising to a height of some 2000 feet or more: that is, at least 1200 feet above the level of the plain. This margin of hill corresponds with the "administrative boundary," or the line at which the normal administration of India gives way to tribal independence. One well-defined ridge strikes out from this medley of mountains in a long rocky chain, not less than 3000 feet high, and runs approximately east down to the River Indus itself, right across the plain; this is styled the Marwat range. Although the approximate trend of the watercourses intersecting these mountains runs generally from west to east, there exist no truly defined mountain ridges, except such as appear to lie very generally across the direction of the streams. This fact is of considerable importance in appreciating the military problem facing an invader of Waziristan coming from the east, since any advance into the heart of the country must proceed either through





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narrow defiles or across a series of rugged steps or terraces of broken, roadless hill, interspersed with steep cliffs.

**Rivers.**—The river system of Waziristan is no less irregular than that of its mountains. In the north there is the River Tochi, with its tributaries the Khaisora and the Shaktu, that flow into the lower waters of the main stream. The Tank Zam and its minor tributaries spring in the heart of the country and run into the Lower Gumal. Two more important streams, the Shinkai and the Shahur, also feed the Tank Zam. In the extreme south of Waziristan the Wana Toi runs direct into the Upper Gumal. Normally, little water flows down these courses : the beds of the streams are often wide, always strewn with boulders and stones. The shallow water channels meander so much, as they cut their way down the valley, that frequent fording by travellers who follow the river-bed roads becomes inevitable. In such rocky country, however, rainfall soon causes the water-level to rise with amazing rapidity, and the half-dry river-beds can soon grow into deep, raging torrents. Movement then becomes dangerous, if not impossible. In dry weather the streams, on debouching from the lower hills, become lost, since the water disappears in the hot, stony ground. Only after rain or storm is there any depth of water in these courses across the plain. At such times the whole ground becomes so waterlogged that even aerial observation might then fail to detect the actual and normal channel of the streams.

**Climate.**—The climate of Waziristan is typical of that normally prevalent under similar physical conditions ; it can prove unpleasant at all seasons. The plain of the Indus is hot and the proximity of the river, especially in times of flood, causes it to be damp. The foothills and lower valleys can be equally torrid. Tank, for example, is well known for its temperature of 120 degrees and over.



Higher up the nights become cooler, but the summer, even at altitudes of 5000 to 6000 feet, though sometimes bearable, may be found in the long run to be not a little trying. The winter is variable and can prove very severe ; snow falls frequently and hard spells of frost are experienced. The best seasons in Waziristan correspond with the equinoxes. At these times of the year the tribesmen can sleep out in comfort, and it is, consequently, then that they are most likely to be actively engaged in raiding. The summer in the lower-lying districts and valleys is far too hot for military operations. During the early summer the melting of the snow and the rains also render all movement along the valleys very difficult owing to floods. This season has one great advantage from an invader's point of view, in that the tribesmen are then very busy with their annual agricultural tasks, and crops may be found ready for cutting.

Water is a frequent difficulty in Waziristan, and has to be "treated" with a view to the prevention of cholera, dysentery and minor ailments.

**Access into Waziristan.**—The main routes leading from the Derajat, or from the plain of the Indus, into Waziristan are none other than the watercourses. Two principal highways follow the channels of the Rivers Tochi and Gumal respectively. But even these cannot be described as by any means constituting main lines of communication from India into Afghanistan or Baluchistan ; while all the lesser lines of access into Waziristan itself end in the difficult passes of the Suleiman Mountains that are blocked by snow for some part of the year. The country of the Wazirs lies between, and commands, the principal, more important, routes leading across the North-West Frontier of India. This fact has had an appreciable bearing in shaping the historical position and destiny of the Wazir tribes.



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**General aspect of the country.**—Much of Waziristan is incredibly bare, stony, or rocky and sterile. Only in the higher-lying districts is there any growth of trees. In the valleys fertile alluvial flats occur between the rivers and the mountain-sides. On the uplands near the Afghan border there is found tolerable grazing for cattle. The country is, in reality, largely unpopulated, the tribesmen all congregating in villages and hamlets situated in the less arid portions of the valleys, or in such as lie within reach of the grazing grounds. It would appear that at one time the whole region was largely covered with woods, but, similarly to what happened in Spain, on the plateau of Castile, former reckless felling of trees has effectually altered the character of the land and even the climate. Agriculture is carried on as a staple industry only in the irrigated area near Bannu. In the hills cultivation is practised on every alluvial flat or *kach*. On the more level valley floors, around Makin and Kaniguram, the sloping ground is carefully terraced by means of retaining-walls, just as may be seen in several parts of southern Europe. At Wana the valley widens into a plain 25 by 10 miles in area. Here, with irrigation, there should be every prospect of growing good crops. At Razmak, the centre of the best high-lying country, conditions also improve considerably. Nevertheless, the efforts made by the Wazirs and Mahsuds to till their soil remain inadequate for the needs of the country, and the population remains pastoral, migratory and restless.

The natural result of these conditions is that there are no real towns in the country. The inhabitants live in villages of all sizes, similar to those prevalent elsewhere along the Frontier. The general grouping and frequency of the villages vary from valley to valley, but they are almost invariably defended by works and strongly built

towers that serve as places of refuge in times of need. These towers, indeed, are everywhere to be seen and form a particular feature of the landscape. The principal centres of population in higher Waziristan are Makin and Kaniguram, which adjoin the best grazing grounds of the upper valleys. The latter is the national centre of the Mahsuds, and might almost be classed as a town. It is built in terraces and consists of about one thousand houses and five towers ; it is the chief market of the country, and contains a fairly large bazaar and several rifle and knife factories.

A peculiarity of very many of the Wazir villages is their close proximity to large caves, to which the tribesmen have recourse as dwelling-places in winter for the sake of obtaining greater warmth. These caves were to form admirable " air raid shelters " during the aerial bombardment of the country.

**Ethnography of Waziristan.**—Being generally so barren, Waziristan has never supported a very large population. The total of its inhabitants has been roughly estimated at between 200,000 and 250,000, say somewhere about 40 to 48 inhabitants per square mile. In England the county of Kent, with an area of over 1000 square miles, has a population exceeding 1,000,000, which is equivalent to roughly 1000 inhabitants per square mile. Waziristan is inhabited by four chief tribes, all belonging to the Pathan race ; these are the Darwesh Khel Wazirs, Mahsuds, Dauris and Bhattanis. They speak Pushtoo ; their religion is that of Islam. In the north are the Dauris, who inhabit the Tochi Valley from Ghazlamai village to Khajuri ; they are reputed to be morally the lowest of the Pathan species, but are hardworking and, on occasion, have fought well if attacked by other tribes. There also exists a vicious little group known as the Kabul Khel Wazirs,

inhabiting the hills between Bannu and Thal. The Bhattanis live in the eastern marches of Waziristan, on the borders of the Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu districts, partly inhabiting the "administered" Indian territory and partly independent. Although nominally at feud with the Mahsuds, they have not infrequently been known to join their more turbulent neighbours and raid the lowlands.\* For the present they seem to have identified themselves with British interests. South of the Gumal a small Pathan tribe of especially lawless ways are the Sherannis, who inhabit the valleys round the giant Takhti-Suleiman. These two, which strictly should not be included in the definition of Wazir, call for no further remarks, as they do not enter into the campaign under review. The centre of Waziristan is occupied by the Mahsuds, perhaps the most troublesome of all tribes of the North-West Frontier.† The remaining northern, western and southern portions of the country are occupied by the Darwesh Khel Wazirs, the most numerous of these tribes. The Darwesh Khel can be divided, generally speaking, into the Utmanzai or Tochi Wazirs, and the Ahmadzai or Wana Wazirs according to their geographical distribution. All these hill tribes migrate annually with their flocks according to the season. In the summer the

\* "The Bhattanis are a smallish tribe between our administrative border and the Mahsud country just north of the Gumal, not numerous enough to stand on their own basis, and rather between the devil and the deep sea and known as the Mahsuds' jackals." ("The North-Western Frontier of India To-day," by Major-General Sir G. F. MacMunn, K.C.B., etc., pp. 212, 221, "The Journal of the Royal Artillery," October, 1924.

† "The entirely unreliable Mahsud failed at the test. Arrogant, pig-headed, faithless, three-cornered, attractive, jaunty, soldierly, he murdered his officers time and again and could not fill the bill. A little further away from his own dunghill . . . he was somewhat better." "The North-Western Frontier of India To-day," by Major-General Sir G. F. MacMunn, K.C.B., etc., pp. 212, 221, "The Journal of the Royal Artillery," October, 1924.

Tochi Wazirs frequent the higher hills and then move down to lower grazing grounds in winter ; the Wana Wazirs occupy the Wana and Shakai plains in summer and make their way towards the western borders of the Bannu district in the autumn. The Mahsuds are split up into numerous sections, none of which live in any very distinctly defined areas, but they, too, all migrate with the seasons, although remaining in more inaccessible districts.

**Politics.**—These conditions of life have strongly influenced the character and mode of life of the whole population of Waziristan. Like that of all such primitive peoples their social organization is tribal and patriarchal. They have, moreover, remained exceedingly independent, and have never been effectually conquered or tamed. Naturally lawless, the poverty of their country has intensified their propensity to plunder and maraud, while an inclination to cruelty renders them at times little better than bloodthirsty brigands. It is only natural, therefore, that they should live as largely by these questionable methods as by less lawless modes of livelihood. They are very democratic by nature and have never been swayed by the advice or politics of their elders or *maliks*. This circumstance has resulted in a considerable lack of cohesion between the various tribes and sections, a known weakness that has frequently been exploited by the Indian Government in dealing with them. On the other hand, as they are so little amenable to the guidance of their leaders or elders, any reliance on the ability of a tribal conclave of headmen, or *jirga*, to accept terms or impose its will upon the community at large is ever problematical, even if it be not usually out of the question. This circumstance was demonstrated many times during the fighting of 1919-20. Neither are the Wazirs deeply or readily swayed by their Mullahs. The one outstanding exception is that of the

notorious Mulla Powinda, named the "Pestilential Priest" by Lord Kitchener, who was able to exert some certain influence before his death in 1913.

**The military characteristics of Mahsuds and Wazirs.**—Feuds are frequent amongst the Wazirs, but are not usually carried to such extremes or for so long as among the Afridis. Inter-tribal feuds also exist, but may be sunk at any moment in order to make common cause against an invader. This occurred in 1919.

As a fighting man the Wazir and the Mahsud, always more particularly the latter, when in his own country, may be classed very high. Agile and enduring, he is possessed, on his own hillsides of an astonishing mobility, which is intensified by complete disregard of impedimenta, as well as by a natural hardiness that greatly simplifies all supply problems. His skill with the small-bore rifle is considerable, and is only surpassed by a great capacity to exploit the slightest weakness shown by his enemy. Disregard of methods of security on the one hand, a too slavish routine in their enforcement on the other, miscalculations as to time and space, all these faults have been repeatedly penalized by the Mahsud and Wazir. The tribesman is gifted with untiring patience and vigilance in observing an enemy when the latter is on the move, a characteristic which makes it extremely difficult to outflank or to surprise him. He is an expert in the attack of detached posts and in the surprise of small parties. This skill may be enhanced by the employment of ruses which can justly be stigmatized as closely akin to treachery. Lastly, he possesses an even greater faculty than the Boer farmer for figuring as a peaceful cultivator at one instant only to reappear the next moment in the guise of the sharp-shooting sniper.

**Their fighting strength.**—The fighting strength of the



Wazir and Mahsud tribes is difficult to determine. The total absence of any central control, combined with the primitive methods of supply in vogue, renders any stable or numerous formation impossible of attainment. It is the custom of the tribes to assemble a temporary levy or *lashkar*, which varies in strength according to the objective in prospect and the attraction which the latter may exercise. Then of a sudden, when the fighting is over or supplies give out, a levy may dissolve just as the situation or the caprice of the moment dictates.

After the operations of 1919-20, the maximum fighting strength of the Wazirs (proper) was estimated at 23,000, that of the Mahsuds at 16,000. But reckoning the numbers of efficient breech-loading rifles of all patterns at their disposal, these figures can be reduced to 10,000 and 12,000 respectively. There might exist sufficient old pattern weapons, including smooth-bores, to arm the remainder of the adult males of the tribes. Apart from local supply and other considerations, the total resources in men of the tribes opposed to the British advance during the campaign of 1919-20 were calculated to be :—

	Fighting men.	Modern rifles.
Mahsuds (including Urmars of Kaniguram) . . .	16,000	8,000
Wana Wazirs . . .	7,000	3,000

The Tochi Wazirs did not join in the fighting, although some of their more ardent fire-eaters undoubtedly made common cause with the Mahsuds and joined their *lashkars*.

It was and remains improbable (in 1925) that any *lashkar*—consisting wholly of riflemen—would, or could, exceed the number of modern small-bore rifles possessed by the tribesmen, and this total has been credibly stated to be not more than 3500. Larger contingents might be

in attendance when fighting is in progress, either to act as swordsmen, or to bring up supplies, or to take up rifles from casualties. On 1st February, 1920, it is said that the combined Wazir and Mahsud *lashkars* assembled between Bangiwala and Dwa Toi actually totalled 4500 men. In addition there may have been present half as many more tribesmen armed with obsolete firearms and swords. Nevertheless, this figure may be assumed as having been altogether exceptional, and was caused chiefly by the arrival of Afghan emissaries and Afghan mountain guns in support of the tribesmen. When these guns failed, the *lashkar* shrank away once more to very modest proportions.\*

Although thus possessing a total of some 10,000 older rifles (Martinis and other similar models) their employment in the fighting of 1919-20 seems to have been strictly prohibited by day. During four months of continuous engagements General Skeen, the G.O.C. the Derajat Column, states that he only noticed two black-powder discharges. No other weapons besides rifles and swords were employed by the tribesmen during the campaign with the exception of a very few bombs or hand grenades. But there is no reason to believe that they might not, on a future occasion, appear in the field with a quantity of the latter projectiles, also possibly with a few captured Lewis guns, if, indeed, they can afford the ammunition to employ such weapons. They are certainly acquainted with the use of wire-cutters. With the greatest elation, at the close of January, 1920, the Mahsuds received the support of artillery in the shape of two six-pounder Afghan mountain guns as already referred to above. These pieces proved but a dismal failure in action—their

\* The Official Account states the *lashkar* to have numbered 8000, and to have assembled near Marobi on 7th February. This does not appear to harmonize with the actual course of events.

range was not greater than 2000 yards, whilst many of their shell were blind.

**Tactics.**—There can be no question that frontier tribes had never before 1919 entered on a campaign armed with better weapons or in possession of more plentiful ammunition, having then recently acquired from various sources considerable numbers of British service rifles with a large quantity of ammunition and other equipment. Their supply of smokeless ammunition, in particular, had increased largely during the Great War. Much of it had been purchased, while much had been received from illicit sources. Afghan officials in Khost, not to mention Afghan agents in Waziristan, were doubtless still contributing to these stores to the end of the campaign. On the other hand, the tribesmen, during the fighting of 1919-20, displayed but few symptoms of what might be termed any truly reasoned conduct of operations. This total lack of strategic insight considerably lightened the burden of the invading troops. Nevertheless, the irregular combatant, although he maintained his traditional penchant for purely local defence, became at times surprisingly aggressive. But he still preferred to attack the head of an invading column. Moreover, in the province of "major tactics" the Mahsud was to display some very distinct advance on former practice. As a result of these facts all the earlier actions of the war manifested a far more serious and obstinate character than had ever been experienced on the frontier. Still the idea of employing his infinitely superior mobility on the hillside, which might conceivably have rendered the tribesman equivalent to a species of "mountain cavalry" for any well-timed stroke *en masse*, remained entirely foreign to him. In view of the outcome of the first engagements of the campaign, this circumstance might have been reckoned as

fortunate. In the end it was to come about that, in spite of this unusual and fierce pertinacity in resisting the invader's progress, more especially displayed at the beginning of the campaign, the staying power of the Mahsuds was gradually worn down. The very slow but steady advance of the expedition depreciated the enemy's *morale*, whereupon his *lashkars* grew smaller, while his courage diminished. Eventually, as the invader's movements grew more certain and rapid, the Mahsuds abandoned all thought of systematic opposition in favour of typical, petty, partisan warfare; sniping, sudden small raids, constant harrying of rearguards and convoys. Even these forms of hostility, although they continue in a lesser degree down to the time of writing, are in clear contrast to the ferocious opposition and the noteworthy tactical skill encountered by the first movements of the Waziristan Force. In this respect the campaign, as it went on, might be said to revert to a more familiar type of frontier warfare. For, in truth, the *morale* of the Mahsud was to be severely shaken, as soon as he encountered an enemy whose fighting spirit and mobility most nearly approached his own. And so, probably, it will ever be in dealing with these frontier tribes.

## CHAPTER III

### A SUMMARY OF THE MILITARY OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT IN WAZIRISTAN UP TO THE CLOSE OF THE GREAT WAR

**The first campaign, 1860.**—Since 1860 not less than six major expeditions have penetrated into Waziristan. These have been directed mainly, if not wholly, against the Mahsuds, since the Darwesh Khel Wazirs have never proved so unmanageable, probably because the Darwesh Khel hold land near or on the plains, while their hill settlements are the more accessible. These earlier expeditions are not devoid of interest, since they illustrate very clearly :—

- (i) The increasing difficulty that may nowadays attend the conventional punitive expedition of the past.
- (ii) The outstanding obstacles that surround the problem of a definite settlement of the North-West Frontier of India.

From the time of the annexation of Waziristan in 1849 until well after the Indian Mutiny, no military operations were undertaken in that country. The presence of a small garrison at Dera Ismail Khan sufficed to check incursions into the lowlands. But in March, 1860, a Mahsud *lashkar*, not less than 3000 strong, suddenly raided the town of Tank. A small force of 200 Indian cavalry, brilliantly led, succeeded in drawing the raiders on to level ground, where they were routed with heavy loss, while British casualties were less than 20. Nevertheless, such an unprovoked assault called for drastic measures. Two cavalry regiments,

an artillery battery and eight battalions, were formed into a movable column, which started up the Tank Zam Valley on 17th April. This force encamped at Palosina, near Jandola, and sent a detachment from that place towards Haidari Kach and Barwand. In its absence a night attack was made on the main camp by some 3000 Mahsuds. After overpowering the piquets, some 500 raiders penetrated into the lines. A well-conducted counter-attack cleared the camp and the Mahsuds were pursued with success over the hills, but British casualties this time amounted to not less than 170. On 2nd May the expedition reached the defile known as Barari Tangi, which had been fortified, while the cliffs on either hand were strongly held. After a hotly contested action a passage was forced at the cost of 120 casualties. The troops then reached Makin and Kaniguram unopposed, yet were unable to bring the Mahsuds to submission. Kaniguram was saved from destruction on payment of a fine; Makin was devastated. Being compelled to turn back owing to a failure of supplies, the expedition marched unmolested to Bannu, through Razani and the Khaisora Valley. In spite of this success the enterprise yielded scarcely any permanent result. For the next twenty years there was to be perpetual lesser unrest along the Wazir borders.

**The first Mahsud blockade, 1879.**—This petty raiding came to a head in 1879, when Mahsuds, estimated at between 2000 and 3000, again raided Tank, burnt the bazaar and carried off much loot. General disorder on the border ensued, but, owing to the Second Afghan War being then in progress, adequate repressive measures were impossible; a blockade of the Mahsud country was instituted. At best such a measure could prove but a slow way of obtaining any result; it is, at all times, a difficult matter to enforce satisfactorily. At length, in

1881, the close of the Afghan War permitted a punitive expedition being undertaken against the Mahsuds. Two columns, organized as independent brigades, were employed. The first, based on Tank, consisted of 12 guns, some 3700 rifles, with a few cavalry; the second, intended to act as a reserve at Bannu, comprised 8 guns, 3400 rifles, also with some cavalry. The two forces marched through the Mahsud country almost unopposed, the first moving from Tank through Jandola and Barwand to Kaniguram, the Bannu Column advancing straight up the Khaisora Valley to Razmak. From these points they retraced their steps, the Bannu Force visiting the hitherto unknown Shaktu Valley. Casualties did not exceed the low figure of 32. Although successful in reaching its objectives, the expedition did not attain its purpose, for the Mahsuds never actually complied with the terms offered to them. The blockade therefore was continued, whereupon the Mahsuds next turned to Afghanistan for help. But the negotiations at Kabul took an unfavourable turn, and were dropped. The blockade, in the meantime, had been making itself severely felt, and gradually the feelings of the majority of the Mahsuds veered to a settlement with the Government. Eventually six of the Mahsud leaders were surrendered by the tribe and the blockade was raised.

**The third campaign, 1893.**—For ten years, with the exception of habitual frontier incidents, there was virtual peace with both Wazirs and Mahsuds, until in February, 1892, Afghan intrigues were again productive of trouble. More than that: in May an Afghan force appeared at Wana, and the Wazirs grew so restless that a British force was ordered to assemble at Khajuri Kach. Then in September the Afghan force withdrew and the tribesmen relapsed into quiescence without military intervention. Next, in 1893, Sir Mortimer Durand visited

Kabul, where after negotiations he induced the Amir to relinquish all claim to Waziristan. Accordingly, in 1894 a Commission set out to delimit the new Indo-Afghan frontier. It was escorted by a force composed of one squadron, one mountain battery and three battalions. At the same time a request was received at Simla from the Wana Wazirs that the Government of India should take over the administration of their country. The Commission on 24th October reached Wana, where nothing occurred to convey the impression that the Wazirs were hostile. By 1st November, however, it became known that a *lashkar* of Mahsuds under the leadership of the Mulla Powinda was intending mischief. Early on the 3rd, whilst still dark, a wild rush by 500 fanatics penetrated the camp of the escort. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued and only with difficulty were the raiders driven out at the point of the bayonet. A daylight pursuit was continued and inflicted heavy losses on the tribesmen. British casualties totalled 130; in addition, rifles and cash were lost and numerous transport animals were killed or maimed. This wanton attack necessarily led to a punitive expedition. Three brigades participated; the 1st, consisting of the original escort strengthened by one battalion, started from Wana; the 2nd, of like strength, from Jandola; the 3rd, slightly weaker, from Bannu. Lieutenant-General Sir William Lockhart commanded the whole force. No fighting worthy of record ensued; Waziristan was overrun; appropriate penalties were exacted; native towers and defences were demolished; lastly, 1000 head of cattle were confiscated. British casualties amounted to only 23.

**Minor incidents.**—No serious trouble then arose for some years, and in 1896 Wana was permanently occupied at the request of the Wazirs. None the less, isolated acts



of violence occurred, particularly in the Tochi Valley. In 1897 a most treacherous attack was made on the escort of a Political Officer at Maizar in the Upper Tochi, but reinforcements were fortunately able to intervene from Datta Khel in time to extricate the escort, which withdrew safely, but with over 50 casualties. Thereupon the Wazirs, fearing retribution, begged for assistance both from neighbouring tribes as well as from the Afghans. But no aid materialized, while a strong force of two mixed brigades was despatched up the Tochi by the Government of India. Sheranni and Maizar, among other localities, were raided and all local defences and towers destroyed. The fighting was insignificant, British casualties amounting to no more than 14, though much sickness set in. At the moment it was feared that the fighting then in progress in Tirah might spread to Waziristan, but that belief proved unfounded, although the submission of the Wazirs was undoubtedly delayed by events occurring further north.

**The second Mahsud blockade, 1900.**—Unrest then once more spread among the Mahsuds. During 1898 and 1899 raids grew in frequency, until in 1900 Government buildings were attacked at Zam, Murtaza and near Tank. As a punishment the Mahsuds were ordered to pay a fine of Rs.100,000. Since these terms were not complied with, another blockade of their country was instituted in December, 1900. A cordon of posts was established on the eastern Mahsud borders, and the Gumal Valley was strongly held. The Mahsuds then gave way and began to pay their fine. But in January, 1901, a new series of outrages caused the Government to intensify the blockade, and finally to resort to reprisals. Contrary to previous practice, no preliminary notice of intended attack was given. On 23rd November four separate columns, each about 1000 strong, left Datta Khel, Jandola, Sarwekai and

Wana with the object of demolishing defences, confiscating cattle and of destroying crops and grain. The Mahsuds, taken by surprise, offered but little resistance. Again, on 4th December, a column of 2500 rifles with 4 guns reached Dwe Shinkai. This time there was less prospect of catching the tribesmen off their guard, and some fighting ensued. A third expedition next started from Jandola and up the Shinkai Valley. Two separate columns met at Dwe Shinkai, whence they raided the Shinkai Valley in three detachments. Although offering little actual resistance, the Mahsuds still showed no disposition to submit. Accordingly, a fourth attack was sent out in three columns varying from 1400 to 2500 in strength and based on Jandola, Jani Khel and Datta Khel respectively. These visited the Sheranna, Shaktu and Shuza Valleys. The Mahsuds, at length convinced of the futility of further resistance, submitted and the blockade again came to an end. Total British casualties amounted to only 150 ; whereas the Mahsuds lost 400, also 200 prisoners and 8000 cattle ; 64 towers and defences of 153 villages were levelled.

It was now the turn of the Kabul Khel, a small section of the Darwesh Khel Wazirs, living east of the River Kurram, where since 1899 a small gang of outlaws had been busy. Four small columns were sent against the tribe. The outlaws were hunted down ; 66 towers were demolished and over 5000 cattle confiscated. Comparative peace then prevailed in Waziristan for a few years, although isolated minor outrages would call forth penal measures. But in 1911, 2000 Mahsuds suddenly invested Sarwekai, until the speedy arrival of a brigade from Dera Ismail Khan caused the *lashkar* to disperse without further action. In 1913 British posts on the Upper Tochi were attacked, but no measures of importance were thought necessary at the time.

**The period of the Great War.**—The outbreak of the

Great War did not fail to exercise a menacing influence all along the North-West Frontier. The adherence of Turkey to the cause of the Central Powers was in itself of deep import throughout the world of Islam. Turkish emissaries made their way into Afghanistan, and, in all probability, beyond that country. At any rate, the border tribes received every incitement to look for a lead from the Afghan against the infidel. A movement was unquestionably on foot among all these turbulent mountaineers to bring about a Holy War or *Jihad*. The situation was no easy one for the Government of India, since the military forces at its disposal were being called away in order to be replaced by both British and Indian troops possessing little experience of frontier warfare (see Chapter I). This state of affairs was clearly familiar to the tribes in Waziristan. Nevertheless, under prevailing circumstances it could only form an integral part of the Government policy to avoid any unnecessary military commitment on the border. Fortunately, it happened that the Amir of Afghanistan preferred an attitude not only officially correct yet also truly friendly. The frontier remained surprisingly tranquil. It was only against the Mahsuds, out of the many hill tribes, that operations on an important scale were undertaken during the Great War. Even so, it was not until their truculent attitude had rendered such a step unavoidable that a punitive expedition was organized against them.

The whole record of the Mahsuds during the period of the War proved bad. The autumn of 1914 was marked by petty raids of no intrinsic significance, until at the close of November a larger raiding party of *Khostwals* from Afghanistan entered the Tochi Valley only to be driven back by the Northern Waziristan Militia. In January, 1915, not less than 10,000 mixed Afghan tribesmen again

crossed the border from the direction of Khost. They were once more met by the Militia, supplemented by a small mixed force of regulars some 2000 strong, and routed with heavy loss. Peace now reigned in the Tochi for two years. The Mahsuds had not participated in these incidents, but they were restless and minor outrages continued to take place. Yet the Government was compelled to put off any final solution of the Mahsud problem. Its policy, therefore, was to temporize with the openly hostile parties among the Mahsuds, whilst attempting to keep the friendly sections in good humour. In October, 1915, however, their predatory tendencies grew stronger and raiding more frequent. The mainspring of all lawlessness was one Mulla Fazl Din, son of the former notorious Mulla Powinda. Throughout 1916, resort was made to negotiations and other expedients to avoid launching an expedition against Fazl Din and his supporters. But in February, 1917, Fazl Din raised a *lashkar* from the more irreconcilable sections of the tribe, and openly defied the Government. On 1st March his following, now 3000 strong, besieged the fortified post of Sarwekai in the Gumal Valley. On the 8th the *lashkar* dispersed only just before the arrival of a column detached from the Derajat brigade. Barwand village was then burnt as a reprisal by the column which slowly returned to Tank.

**The campaign of 1917.**—A period of petty raiding next culminated in a more serious attempt against a convoy near the Gumal River, the escort suffering 20 casualties. The movable column maintained at Murtaza (some 18 miles further down the Gumal) forthwith proceeded as far as Wana, whence it returned. On 1st May another convoy was attacked; this time there were over 100 casualties. On 6th May the post at Tormandu, near Murtaza, was attacked. On the 9th the garrison of Sarwekai

intercepted some 400 to 500 Mahsuds making their way back from these affrays into the Shahur Valley. The enemy, strange to relate, allowed themselves, on this occasion, to be surprised but fought with great ferocity. British casualties amounted to no less than 170. The growing scale of these incidents demanded energetic action, and an important expedition was set on foot. It was now becoming amply clear that nothing short of either a systematic occupation or disarmament of the Mahsud population would solve this perennially recurring problem. But in 1917 such action was impossible; consequently recourse was had to punitive measures as a pure palliative. The Khaisora Valley was selected for the objective of the expedition for two reasons :—

- (i) The punishment of those sections of the Mahsuds most heavily implicated in the recent outrages would be secured.
- (ii) That valley lay sufficiently remote to prevent uneasiness spreading into Afghanistan as to the intentions of the Indian Government.

**Details of the campaign.**—A column of two mixed brigades, under the command of Major-General W. G. L. Beynon, C.B., etc., was therefore mobilized for the task. The plan of operations of the force was the following :—\*

- (a) To concentrate at Wana; thence to move into and devastate the Khaisora Valley; next to return to Wana until the effect of the reprisal could be judged.
- (b) The Gumal Valley was to be strongly held; all the Gumal posts strengthened up to one battalion apiece, with a small reserve at Jandola.
- (c) Four battalions were added to the Bannu brigade

\* The course of this campaign should be compared with the operations of 1919-20.

in the Tochi ; this latter force being designed to maintain a defensive attitude.

The movement of troops and, still more, of supplies up the Gumal Valley were greatly hampered by early summer floods. The concentration of the necessary three weeks' supplies for the column at Wana was consequently much delayed, while the Mahsuds, taking advantage of the floods, showed great audacity in attacking the convoys when in difficulties along the road. As these obstacles were seen to be rapidly increasing, the scheme was reconsidered with the result that an alternative line of advance into the upper Khaisora district via Jandola up the Shahur Valley was proposed. The choice between the two routes depended on these factors :—

- (i) The Gumal route lay more remote from the Mahsud country.
- (ii) There existed a motor road from Tank to Murtaza, which, with the help of one additional bridge, could be continued to Nili Kach.

But :—

- (iii) The River Gumal is very liable to sudden flood.
- (iv) The country is difficult and favours sniping.
- (v) The stages are long, while the climate is unhealthy.

On the other hand, the Shahur route possessed these characteristics :—

- (a) Except for the passage through the Shahur Tangi (3 miles), it is easier to protect.
- (b) Floods are not so likely to prove a serious obstacle.
- (c) The stages are shorter and the climate healthier.
- (d) The use of this route would accelerate the work of the troops by ten days.

The latter route was, therefore, chosen.

When making this selection due consideration was paid to these additional circumstances :—

1. The tribes living along the River Shahur had, by recent participation in raids, thrown in their lot with the recalcitrants : there was, consequently, no further object in avoiding their district—rather the reverse.
2. The presence of the troops at Jandola might impress the Bhattanis and so cover the lowlands against raid.

Preparations were accordingly made for an advance up the River Shahur from Jandola ; the Gumal posts were strengthened and revictualled, the garrison of Sarwekai being augmented to two battalions with two guns.

Before the advance could begin, however, a serious raid took place in the Tochi Valley against the post of Tut Narai. This constitutes an exploit of such audacity, and is so typical of the cunning of the tribesmen, as to merit brief notice. On 30th May a *lashkar* 1200 strong, about one-half being Abdullai from Makin, was reported approaching the Tochi. On the morrow a party of seven Mahsuds—two of these being men disguised as girls—were seen outside the wire entanglement of the Tut Narai post. By a ruse this group had nearly reached the gate in company with the sentry when the alarm was given. The sentry was thereupon shot ; the guard was rushed and killed, while a further party of 30 Mahsuds who had remained in hiding not far away managed to enter the fort. The garrison was next “held up,” whilst the bell of arms was raided. In the meantime the telegraphist had been shot down, but not before he had despatched a summons for help. This came from the neighbouring posts with such speed that, within two hours of the raiders being sighted, reinforcements to the strength of 450 men

had reoccupied the post. But the Mahsuds, before being driven off with loss, had carried off some 60 rifles and 120,000 rounds of ammunition. Their success was due to their unerring observation of the routine of the garrison and to the knowledge of a change in the placing of the single gate sentry.

The affair drew attention to the Tochi and it was debated whether :—

- (i) The majority of the Tochi posts should be given up.
- (ii) A brigade should enter Mahsud country from that valley.

It was, however, decided to do no more than strengthen the troops in the Tochi and to hold the post of Miranshah with a mixed force amounting to 4000 men. All the troops in the Tochi were now designated the North Waziristan Force, whilst those assembling at Jandola were styled the South Waziristan Force. The entire forces were placed under the direction of General Sir Arthur Barrett, G.C.B., etc., commanding the Northern Army at Murree. No real fighting took place in the Tochi, and so the activity of the northern force may be ignored. The task of the Southern Waziristan Force, however, was not to be so easy.

Many sections of the Mahsuds were by now thoroughly aware of, and ill at ease concerning, the concentration taking place at Jandola. The agricultural claims of the season were also unsettling the tribesmen, for the sowing of maize and of rice was due ; barley was ready for cutting and wheat would shortly follow. On 29th May a *jirga* was held at Kaniguram, when there was published a communication, lately received from the Amir of Afghanistan, which made it clear that the Mahsuds could not hope for any form of help from that direction. The Wana and Tochi Wazirs were, moreover, much less bellicose than the



**Mahsuds.** Unfortunately for the peace party, the exploit of Tut Narai on 31st May, shortly followed by further and similar incidents, precluded all hope of a friendly settlement. Consequently, at the incitement of Mulla Fazl Din, the Mahsuds grew more determined to oppose the advance of the South Waziristan Force.

The latter moved out of Jandola on 12th June. At first the Mahsuds appear to have acted on the assumption that the expedition would follow the Tank Zam route. Anyhow an important *lashkar* was posted to the north of the junction of that river with the Shahur. It shortly fell back, and subsequent air reconnaissance showed that the tribesmen had dispersed, as it turned out later, on account of the heat and of a scarcity of supplies. On the 14th and 15th June the Force passed through the dangerous defile, known as Shahur Tangi, to Haidari Kach. Still under the belief that the Force would advance along the Tank Zam, the tribesmen had taken few steps to remove their property. Villages, crops, water channels and mills were systematically destroyed. On the 19th the Force advanced until it met strong opposition 3 miles east of Barwand. During that night a determined and prolonged Mahsud attack on a detached post was defeated. Owing to the tribesmen's previous successes in attacking detachments and convoys, this little victory proved welcome. Next day, owing to difficulties of water, the Force moved to the plateau of Ispana Raghza, where there existed a perennial supply. The climate also improved and the nights turned cooler. Further devastation was then regularly carried out. A few miles to the north of the Shahur, the village of Nanu, used as a base by the *lashkar* opposing the Force, was destroyed after a stiff engagement to carry the Nanu Pass. This proved to be the principal action of the campaign.

By the 22nd it was established that the enemy opposing

the column did not exceed 4000, and that this number was fluctuating daily. Many of the Mahsuds were wavering, whilst the northern sections, afraid of attack from the Tochi, had not participated in the fighting. The Jandola Line of Communications was safe and the supply system working fairly well. On the other hand, the Shahur Tangi had been blocked by flood ; there was also a good deal of sickness.

**Results thereof.**—On the 23rd an advance was made to Narai Raghza, 7 miles further up the Shahur River. More devastation was carried out. The difficult defile below Narai Raghza was traversed with unexpected ease, although opposition was to be encountered when camp was pitched on the Raghza itself. On the 24th the Sharwanai Pass was forced by means of a skilful manoeuvre, aeroplanes rendering valuable assistance, and so the troops once more found themselves in the Shahur Valley. The Mahsud villages which lie very close together in this more fertile district were regularly destroyed. Emissaries next arrived to ask for terms and an armistice. As the destruction appeared adequate for political purposes, General Beynon decided to retire to Ispana Raghza. The withdrawal began, though the passage of the defile was not to be achieved with the same ease as before. Further devastation was carried out, while aeroplanes were also sent out on daily raids. The Kaniguram Valley was bombed with effect, direct hits being obtained on Makin and Marobi. On 25th June information was gained that the defeat at Nanu, combined with the serious devastation of the valley and the novel aeroplane raids, had greatly disheartened the tribesmen. Simultaneously a communication received from the Amir by the Viceroy showed that the former was attempting to repress further disorder. At the request, therefore, of a Mahsud *jirga* held at Kaniguram, the

following demands were conveyed to them from General Beynon :—

- (i) Settlement of the case of Major Dodd, murdered in April, 1914.
- (ii) All rifles captured since 1st March to be returned.
- (iii) All prisoners to be released.
- (iv) Outlaws from British territory to be expelled or surrendered.
- (v) Guarantee for future good behaviour to be given.

On the 26th offensive operations were then discontinued and five days of grace were granted to the Mahsuds. The Government terms were finally accepted by them, and the first instalment of rifles surrendered on 9th July. The Force retired further down the valley to camp at Manzai, at the junction of the Shahur and Danawat Rivers, whilst rifles and prisoners continued coming in regularly at Sarwekai. On 10th August peace was made at a ceremonial *jirga* and the Force returned to Jandola. The situation on the North-West Frontier was to remain normal until the close of the Great War.

**Summary of these various operations.**—It is not without interest to review certain general features of these campaigns. Five expeditions of a serious nature had taken place in Waziristan, i.e. in 1860, 1881, 1894, 1901 and 1917. During none of these had the Mahsuds offered any really protracted or desperate resistance. Sharp isolated actions—a few being hotly contested—much petty skirmishing, continuous sniping there had been, but little more. The battle casualties suffered by the expeditions are sufficient proof of that fact; they range from 23 in 1894 to some 300 to 400 in 1860 and in 1917. Nevertheless, the Mahsuds had proved many times that they might on occasion prove dangerous enemies and stubborn in defence. In

the night attack at Palosina in April, 1860, and the similar episode at Wana in 1894, they had shown a fierce fighting spirit. At Tut Narai in 1917 they had displayed rare cunning and audacity. Lastly, many of their attacks against convoys, chiefly those along the Gumal route, and against detached posts during all these years, had been inspired with great tactical insight. But the march of the South Waziristan Force of 1917 into the Khaisora Valley was in many respects a short affair when compared with what had been achieved in previous expeditions. Fourteen days' march and relatively light casualties had sufficed to make the enemy sue for peace. Such a result could scarcely be taken as a presage of the severe trials that awaited the invading force in 1919.

But, in spite of the ease with which the campaign of 1917 was brought to its conclusion, certain facts were already becoming patent. Whereas in 1860 a single brigade had marched right through Waziristan without grave hindrance, and whereas in 1894 and 1901 widely separated columns were employed with impunity, yet for many years it was beginning to be believed that an invader of Waziristan must employ greater forces and observe greater precautions. Further, just as the Mahsuds were acquiring more rifles of range and precision firing smokeless powder, and also exhibiting greater skill in their use, so the invader was ever inclined to resort to more scientific equipment and more impedimenta. In addition, public opinion now demanded more comforts for the troops; while a fresh difficulty was accruing out of the increasing number of medical units accompanying any expedition. Circumstances were thus all tending to complicate the transport problem and to augment the size of supply trains. Yet the Lines of Communication were unquestionably becoming more vulnerable than they were before the tribesmen

possessed modern weapons. It was still necessary to employ long convoys of primitive pack transport; even in 1919 motor transport was impracticable above the lower valleys. Lastly, in Waziristan there was always the unknown and menacing factor of possible Afghan intrigue: this proved an even more uncertain quantity in 1919.

In 1917 the expedition was fortunate in that its component troops included two or three battalions that were still unspoiled by the necessities of the Great War. The Mahsuds, moreover, received no encouragement of any kind from Afghan sources. The tribes and sections were far from being united amongst themselves. Aeroplanes, then a novel engine of war on the frontier, also proved a valuable means of intimidating and of breaking the spirit of the tribesmen. Lastly, the devastation of the Khaisora Valley was effected before the hillmen had either recovered from the surprise of the march up the Shahur Valley, or been able to score any effective success against the invaders. So their resistance broke down early. Still, in justice to the expedition of 1917, it should be added that the brevity of the campaign was no criterion of the hardships endured or of the spirit with which the operations were carried through. The heat of that month of June was intense; the days were very long. The diurnal variation of temperature averaged from 20 to over 43 degrees. Sickness became rife among the younger and unseasoned troops. On the other hand, this summer campaigning had the incalculable advantage of finding the tribesmen's crops in the most favourable state for destruction. It would have been utterly unreasonable to expect that a future expedition into Waziristan might, as a matter of course, come to a similar and equally satisfactory ending. Conditions changed greatly between 1917 and 1919, and not a little to the disadvantage of the Indian Army.

The utility and the permanency of the results attained by these various expeditions must, however, remain the true standard by which they should be judged. The devastation of a country mostly barren by nature, especially if repeated at no distant intervals of time, cannot be regarded as the most certain method of pacifying needy and turbulent tribes. There exists, moreover, the necessity of reconciling these peoples to the rule of the Government of India : in other words, of compelling them to follow less lawless ways of livelihood. The expedition of 1860, successful though it may have been as a military operation, did not result in the submission of the Mahsuds. The campaign of 1881, in the words of the Official Account, had been "successful up to a point" only, and the blockade of the Mahsuds had to be continued for a year longer, that is, two years in all. In 1894 "the whole of Waziristan was overrun from end to end. . . . Nevertheless, crimes of violence continued to be of frequent occurrence during the next few years." Again, after another two years' blockade in 1901, "the severity of the punishment inflicted on the Mahsuds by these operations did not, however, impress all sections of the Wazirs, and before the end of the year an expedition had to be set on foot against the Kabul Khel" (inhabiting the north of Waziristan). Finally, although the campaign of 1917 had achieved its immediate object, there was more than good ground for the conviction that a punitive expedition, properly so called, could never be considered a practical, still less a final, solution of the Mahsud problem.

## CHAPTER IV

### EVENTS IN WAZIRISTAN FROM THE CLOSE OF THE GREAT WAR DOWN TO NOVEMBER, 1919

**The outbreak of the Third Afghan War.**—The outbreak of the Third Afghan War in May, 1919, was scarcely calculated to leave the population of Waziristan unmoved for long. Past experience had shown too clearly how the slightest rumour of anti-British activity across the Afghan border sufficed to excite both Mahsuds and Wazirs. How much greater the effect of actual hostilities might prove could not then be foreseen, though some upheaval of a serious nature could only be anticipated. Nevertheless, the policy of the Indian Government in the event of a rising in Waziristan had been determined beforehand; it would bide its time, taking only such precautionary measures as the general military situation allowed. This attitude also conformed to the instructions issued in 1916 by the Committee of the War Cabinet, already quoted in Chapter I. Accordingly, the troops on the spot were formed into a "Waziristan Force" and placed under the command of Major-General Woodyatt, C.B., etc., who in turn was set under the orders of General Sir Arthur Barrett, G.C.B., etc., G.O.C. the North-Western Frontier Force.

**Its effects in Waziristan.**—Some reference to the state of affairs prevailing along the entire frontier is necessary in order to grasp the significance of the situation in Waziristan. The outbreak of the Afghan War had been caused by the sudden and direct action of the Amir. As a consequence of

a forward movement of Afghan regular troops, the Indian Army was mobilized on 5th May and advanced west of Peshawar. By the 17th the Afghan Army had been defeated and was shortly dispersed. For political reasons the Government of India stayed its hand, and by the 31st of the month the Amir was suing for an armistice. But in this preliminary advance by his regular troops the true danger of the Amir's adventure did not reside. In the words of the Commander-in-Chief's despatch (dated 15th March, 1920): "The tribal offensive was the basis of the whole [Afghan] plan. . . . Their best and only chance of success lay in securing the co-operation of the tribes and in co-ordinating their efforts. The looseness of our political control over a large portion of the border territory made it a promising field for such an enterprise." In accordance with that policy Afghan emissaries and parties of Afghan troops had made themselves felt along the whole frontier. From Chitral to Baluchistan Afghan agents were attempting to excite the bellicose and predatory instincts of all mountain tribes. The Holy War, *Jihad*, was being preached. So the Government of India was more than justified in maintaining strict military precautions along this whole front of over 1000 miles. The North-Western Frontier Force was entrusted with the conduct of the actual operations against the Afghans in front of Peshawar, as well as with protective duties along the remainder of the front extending from Chitral to the Zhob. Beyond this point the task of protection was entrusted to the newly formed Baluchistan Force, commanded by Lieutenant-General R. Wapshare, C.B., etc. Even the small force stationed at Meshed in Southern Persia and commanded by Major-General W. Matheson, C.B., came into the scheme of operations.

The collapse of the Afghan regular troops did not, however, terminate the crisis. The peace negotiations with



the Amir dragged on until August, and there was still ground for apprehending grave trouble. Military precautions were being increased rather than relaxed. In the whole scheme of such precautions there had been assigned to the Waziristan Force a strictly "active-defensive" rôle. This was, in fact, a sheer necessity in view of the extensive scale of the potential operations. Further, should the situation seem to require such a step, it was directed that the areas lying between the political frontier of India, i.e. the Durand Line, and the administrative boundary, i.e. the line following the junction of the hills with the plain of the Indus, should be evacuated as a temporary measure. Such a decision was at the moment considered to be inevitable owing to the dissipation of force and of transport that might be occasioned if any expedition were to be despatched to the relief of any blockaded post up the Tochi or Gumal Valleys. Consequently, as early as 21st May, when information was received of an Afghan concentration at Khost, since this seemed to foreshadow an Afghan move on the Tochi or towards Wana, General Woodyatt was instructed to leave the Gumal Valley alone and not to move up the Tochi farther west than Miranshah. Moreover, in view of the possibly demoralizing effect which the proximity of Afghan regular troops might exercise among the Waziristan Militias, it was determined that, in the event of any further Afghan advance in the direction of Wana and subsequent disaffection breaking out in Waziristan, all the posts from Wana garrisoned by Militia and maintained down the Gumal should be evacuated. These detachments found by the Southern Waziristan Militia were then to withdraw towards the Indus. A similar course of action was prescribed for the posts of the Northern Waziristan Militia maintained in the Tochi. This policy, however necessary and inevitable it may have

been at the moment, eventually proved to be productive of serious results, which, in turn, became a source of much difficulty in the ultimate campaign against the Mahsuds.

**The Waziristan Force in May, 1919.**—The Waziristan Force at that time, i.e. end of May, was divided between the Bannu and the Derajat areas as follows :—

*Bannu* (H.Q. 67th Brigade)

**At Bannu :**

- 2 squadrons.
- 1 section mountain guns.
- 1 section 6·3 R.M.L. howitzers.
- 2 armoured motor batteries.

**At Dardoni :**

- 1 squadron.
- 1 mountain battery (less 1 section).
- 1 coy. sappers and miners.
- 2 battalions.

**At Kurram Garhi :**

An infantry detachment.

**At their normal posts :**

Northern Waziristan  
Militia and Frontier  
Constabulary.

*Derajat*

**At Dera Ismail Khan :**

- 2 squadrons.
- 1 mountain battery (less 1 section).
- 2 battalions.
- 1 armoured motor battery.

**At Tank :**

- 1 squadron.
- 1 section mountain battery.
- 2 platoons of infantry.

**At Manzai :**

- 1 coy. sappers and miners.
- 1 battalion.

**At Jandola, Khirgi, Girni and Jatta :**

- 2 coys. infantry.

**At their normal posts :**

Southern Waziristan  
Militia and Frontier  
Constabulary.

**Its early movements.**—The first movement of this Force was a portent of what was to follow. On 24th May, Brigadier-General Lucas, commanding at Bannu, with a view to reassuring the Upper Tochi tribes, despatched a column from Dardoni up the Tochi Valley. Unfortunately, information had meanwhile reached the G.O.C. North-Western Frontier Force that an Afghan move on Thal or Miranshah was imminent. Thereupon that officer ordered the return of the column already proceeding to Dardoni. This step revealed the whole weakness of the situation. Realising that the recall of the column might precipitate the wholesale desertion of the Militia detachments scattered along the Tochi Valley, General Lucas instantly took steps to evacuate, with their arms and ammunition, the posts situated above Miranshah and to bring back their garrisons down to Bannu. On 25th May the abandonment of Datta Khel, Tut Narai and Spina Khaisora began. The entire post of Boya was handed over to a Daur *malik* reputed to be loyal. Transport being inadequate to remove all stores, the more bulky and least valuable were burnt. The effect of these measures proved electric. That same evening Wazir tribesmen were sacking Boya and sniping the regular troops assisting in the withdrawal of the Militia detachments. A night march became necessary to enable the column to reach Dardoni, during which ammunition camels were lost and 150 of the Militia deserted. Simultaneously, orders had been issued for the evacuation of the posts at Shewa and Spinwam, lying to the north of Miranshah. As these posts were situated some 30 and 20 miles respectively from Idak, and the route leading thereto was waterless, this proved no easy matter. Rumour had already reached Spinwam that Afghans would soon be marching down the Kaitu Valley towards the River Kurram. The detachment at Shewa

was thereupon called back to Spinwam. Its march was harassed by Wazir tribesmen, who succeeded in taking prisoners. The withdrawal from Spinwam was next carried out with success. Three squadrons of 31st Lancers were sent out from the Tochi Valley to support the movement, which began only when Afghan troops and Wazir tribesmen stood 300 yards distant from the burning post.

**The evacuation of the Tochi Valley.**—As things now stood, the outlook could only be regarded as threatening. The Upper Tochi Wazirs were streaming after the column retiring down the valley on Miranshah. Some of the Dauris, infected by their example, had followed, whilst a large number of Mahsuds were reported to be trooping northwards towards Miranshah. The officers of that garrison were placed in a serious predicament. Afghan intrigues among the militiamen had shaken the fidelity of the numerous Wazirs in the detachment. At first it was thought that these men might remain loyal, but the course of events proved too much for their restless minds. At the instigation of two Wazir officers, one of whom possessed a distinguished war record, 600 Wazirs proclaimed their intention of joining the *Jihad*. The Khattak sepoy remained loyal, although certain elements were doubtful, while the Afridis became suspect. In the meantime 300 men of the 1/41st Dogras had been brought into the fort and posted at the gate and on the walls. During the night, however, the Wazir mutineers succeeded in digging a way through the wall and decamped with their rifles. Fortunately the disappearance of the unreliable elements cleared the air and discipline was restored. But hostile *lashkars*, believing that the evacuation of Dardoni and Miranshah was but a matter of time, hung around like vultures watching their dying prey, until they might loot these posts which they imagined were on the point

of being abandoned. Sniping into the forts continued, and communication with Bannu, except by radio, was broken. On the night 26th/27th all the Lower Tochi posts were attacked except Saidgi, while reports reached Bannu to the effect that the Militia garrisons of Thal, Surkamer, Isha, Khajuri and Shinki had all deserted, carrying off arms and ammunition. Only the Khattaks in those detachments eventually succeeded in reaching Idak or Saidgi with their equipment. The posts that had resisted both the seditious Afghan overtures and the attacks of the Wazir *lashkars*, i.e. Dardoni, Miranshah, Idak and Saidgi, were now closely invested by the tribesmen. Fortunately the opportune arrival at Dardoni of an aeroplane from Kohat caused many of the tribesmen to pause.

On 28th May it was reported that the Afghan troops, together with Wazir *lashkars*, had moved off towards Thal. Notwithstanding this fact, the situation had by this time developed so rapidly that the little garrison of Bannu was reduced to helplessness. There existed the possibility that yet another Afghan advance towards Spinwam and the Lower Tochi might materialize. Again, there seemed every probability that the Wazirs would offer strong opposition at the Shinki defile to the movement of any troops sent up the Tochi Valley. Lastly, it appeared by no means certain that the Mahsuds would not head north through the Khaisora and Shaktu Valleys, and so begin raiding lowland territory. Consequently, with the exception of a small movable column posted at Kurram Garhi in observation of the Spinwam district, the troops remained in readiness at Bannu until reinforcements should arrive.

Such was the position in Northern Waziristan at the end of May. It is now time to consider the course of events in Southern Waziristan, where an equally serious state of affairs had arisen.

**The situation in the Gumal Valley.**—Until 21st May the Gumal Valley and the Wana region had remained entirely peaceful. On this date a report reached Wana to the effect that an Afghan force was on the move and making for that spot. Yet nothing further happened, until on the 25th official information was transmitted to Wana of the evacuation of the Upper Tochi posts. It arrived, in the words of the Official Account, "like a bolt from the blue." In order to anticipate the possible evil effects of the spread of these tidings among the Wazir tribes, as well as to minimize their necessarily demoralizing influence among the Militia garrisons, the evacuation of the South Waziristan posts was decided upon and timed to begin at 18.00 hrs. on the 26th. This operation, fraught with grave difficulty and danger, was so arranged that the detachments in the Gumal Valley above and including Khajuri Kach should move simultaneously southward into the Zhob Valley; the remainder of the garrisons situated further down the river being ordered to withdraw and concentrate at Murtaza. Preparations for these movements were hurriedly made. The situation in Wana Fort now resembled that which also prevailed at Miranshah in the Tochi; but it soon grew worse. At first all appeared to go well with the projected withdrawal, when suddenly it was seen that the Wazirs, aided by certain of the Afridis, militiamen and headed by their own Indian officers, had seized the keep of the fort where the treasure and 600,000 rounds of ammunition were stored. Some firing took place and considerable disorder resulted. Finally, 5 British officers with some 300 men and only 8 riding camels were got together and set out for the Zhob at 21.45 hrs. All the Wazirs and all but 4 or 5 Afridis had deserted; of the remainder who remained loyal 100 were unarmed Indian followers.

**Major Russell's withdrawal to Fort Sandeman.**—On reaching Toi Khula post on the River Gumal, after a 20-mile night march over the Pir Gwazha Pass, the party was greeted by ragged volleys from the post, a fact which clearly showed that insurgent tribesmen were already in occupation. Such being the case, there was no alternative but to continue forthwith to the Zhob. The first ascent to the Tesh plateau was steep ; there was no water, while the heat was great. The Wazirs sniped the little column assiduously. Progress became slow and laborious. On the plateau the loyal elements out of the garrisons of Karab Kot, Tanai and Toi Khula posts, situated between the Wana and Gumal Rivers, were met. With difficulty and with the assistance of a party of the Zhob Levy (Militia) from Moghal Kot, the whole column reached this latter post, which lies on the river itself. Stragglers gradually toiled in, and next morning one British officer with seven men, the remnants of the post of Khajuri Kach, managed to reach Moghal Kot. The whole party being exhausted, the 28th May was spent in the fort under continuous sniping, which caused many casualties and killed the water bullocks. News came in during the day to the effect that the Zhob Levy from Mir Ali Khel, the next post further south up the river, would assist in covering the withdrawal of the little column. On the morning of the 29th, as the mounted party from Mir Ali Khel did not appear and since provisions would not hold out longer, Major G. H. Russell, 126th Baluchis, commanding the retirement, decided to wait no longer. Some severe fighting ensued as the dwindling party emerged from Moghal Kot. Thereupon a panic set in among the sorely tried militiamen. At length the mounted men from Mir Ali Khel came into sight. Under cover of their piquets the broken remnants of the Waziristan Militia were shepherded

as a disorganized rabble to Mir Ali Khel, and thence on to Fort Sandeman. Very few of the men were found, on arrival, to be still in possession of their rifles. For four nights and three days this little column had been kept going throughout a march of 80 miles almost solely by the remarkable efforts and skill of Major Russell, who was himself wounded at Moghal Kot, at the time when no less than five of his colleagues were killed. The entire episode, which brought to light the finest qualities of the British officer in his dealing with Indian troops, deserves to rank high among brilliant personal exploits in the annals of the frontier.

**The evacuation of the Gumal.**—The evacuation of the remaining posts along the Gumal Valley below Khajuri Kach was completed without noteworthy incident. The Southern Waziristan Militia, when reorganized at Tank, numbered only 600—nearly all Khattaks, these men forming about one-third of its original strength. About 1100 men, including all the Wazirs and large numbers of the Afridis, had disappeared with some 1200 rifles, 50 muskets and 700,000 rounds of Service S.A. ammunition. Fortunately the tribesmen were now so much occupied in plundering the deserted posts that they attempted no further attacks. But the news of the evacuation of the Gumal posts and of the booty thus acquired by the Wazirs, did not fail to incite the Mahsuds to seize such an opportunity. They were very soon assembling round Jandola in the eager expectation that the latter post would also be evacuated. On the 29th May communication with Jandola was interrupted, and it became known that the place was invested by a large Mahsud *lashkar*, headed by Mulla Fazl Din. Other posts in the lowlands, notably Murtaza, Gumal, Manjhi and Zarkani, were also being threatened by other Mahsud and Sheranni *lashkars*; urgent demands



for military assistance were coming in from every hand. Virtually the whole of Waziristan was now in a state of active hostility against the Government of India. It needed but the appearance of Afghan detachments, provided with arms for the Wazirs and a little artillery, to set the tribesmen descending upon the plain of the Indus on an unprecedented scale.

**The resultant military situation.**—To the policy which had been conducive to this state of affairs, and still more to sheer stress of circumstances which had rendered such a policy inevitable, may be ascribed the whole blame for the ugly situation now confronting the slender military forces on the spot. The withdrawal of the Tochi garrisons, followed by a similar operation on the Gumal, would at all times have been a dangerous course to pursue. This operation, aggravated as it was by every appearance of haste and, still more, by the precipitate burning of superfluous stores, could, under prevailing circumstances, only be interpreted by the untamed Wazirs and Mahsuds as tantamount to a proof of the impending fall of the British rule in India; it constituted a flagrant violation of an elementary principle in the conduct of uncivilized warfare. It has since been accepted that General Lucas' decision to evacuate the Tochi posts, and the manner in which he ordered the operations to be carried out, was justified by subsequent events. Had it been imagined by these isolated detachments of the Waziristan Militia that they were being left to their fate, their desertion would have been instant and complete, their British officers would have been done to death, whilst an even more serious rising might then and there have taken place. General Lucas was, in fact, making the best of an unsatisfactory situation, not of his own creation, but the result of forces beyond the control of any soldier.

**Major-General Climo's measures.**—Appreciating the situation as demanding instant attention, Army Headquarters in India decided to take the Waziristan Force under its own immediate charge. That Force was consequently removed from the North-Western Frontier Command and placed directly under the Commander-in-Chief in India at Army Headquarters. General Woodyatt, now being required to take command of the 4th Division in Baluchistan, was succeeded in Waziristan by Major-General S. H. Climo, C.B., an officer of much experience on the frontier who had lately been commanding the 3rd Infantry Brigade in the Afghan operations. He arrived in Waziristan on 27th May and was invested with full political powers. On the 30th the Waziristan Force came under Army Headquarters, thus forming an independent link on the frontier between the North-Western and Baluchistan Forces. In view of the inadequate resources at his disposal it was scarcely probable that the new commander would or could attempt any considerable enterprise to retrieve the situation. Recognizing this fact, General Climo wisely decided to deal with the Tochi Valley first and to leave Southern Waziristan alone for the moment, since the garrison of Jandola could be trusted to look after itself, at any rate for a little time.

Such steps as could then be taken were to be considered only in the light of pure palliatives. A definite settlement would only come later when the Afghan problem should have ceased to absorb the main attention of Army Headquarters, no less than all available troops and transport animals. Moreover, the tension of the military situation had in the meanwhile not been relaxed by the symptoms of internal unrest then perceptible in India itself. The approaching hot weather was also making itself severely felt. Already on 1st June minor operations in the Lower

Tochi were being seriously hampered by the heat. Cases of sunstroke and heat exhaustion occurred among the troops. As a climax there supervened a severe outbreak of cholera which spread from Kohat to Bannu and thence to the Derajat. Among the troops 169 deaths occurred from this cause alone. Throughout the summer, apart from that epidemic which was stamped out, climatic conditions remained bad. Finally, the energies of the troops were largely absorbed by heavy and exhausting duties of protection, escorting convoys and by other similar tasks. It may truly be said that there was no possibility of attempting any major enterprise for some time to come. Consequently, all operations, except where such became compulsory in view of the immediate local situation in Waziristan, were avoided throughout the next three or four months. This relative inaction, fully advisable in itself, was rendered practicable by the course of the Afghan War, as well as by the fact that the Wazirs and Mahsuds remained content with raids, continuous it is true, but still on a scale smaller than might have been feared. On 8th August peace with Afghanistan became an accomplished fact. Curiously enough this event did not diminish the enmity shown by the Wazirs and Mahsuds against the British. It seems that a persistent rumour spread among them that, in accordance with the Treaty then being negotiated, their country would shortly be handed over to the Amir of Afghanistan. The military situation on the Waziristan border thus underwent no change for better nor for worse.

**The incidents on the Waziristan borders until November, 1919.**—A brief survey of the incidents that occurred along the Waziristan borders from the 1st June until well into the autumn shows that no really new factors entered into the situation until the winter. General Climo was thus

able to pursue his initial policy without interference or interruption. In the Tochi Valley, where the Headquarters of the 43rd Brigade had reached Bannu on 30th May, the formation of a relief column was first taken in hand. Brigadier-General Lucas at Dardoni determined to carry out some small punitive measures against the Lower Daurs, dwelling in close proximity to the garrisons, in order to neutralize the effect of continued Afghan intrigues, which were now stimulating the hostility of the Wazirs. The Dardoni movable column on 1st June moved out and attacked a Wazir *lashkar* assembling near Darpa Khel close to Miranshah with complete success; 90 casualties were inflicted and towers destroyed. The effect of the stroke was immediate, for the relief column from Bannu passed the Shinki defile without opposition. On the following day the 31st Lancers were able to ride into a party of insurgent Daurs and inflict losses. After the relief column reached Dardoni punitive measures were applied to the vicinity, some villages being burnt and fines levied. Aeroplanes bombed the Upper Tochi. The tribesmen living in the valley were so far impressed with this display of vigour, that, had it been thought desirable, there is little doubt the Upper Tochi posts could have been re-occupied. But the time for such a step had not yet arrived. The Lower Tochi tribes were to give but little trouble for some time. Although in the Upper Tochi symptoms of the assembling of a hostile *lashkar* were reported in early July, no serious attack matured therefrom. On 14th July, however, a daring raid was attempted on the aerodrome at Bannu. Fortunately the raiders were beaten off with loss and without damage to the aeroplanes. At the end of July and during the first fortnight of August there took place a series of attacks on road piquets along the Lower Tochi, Mahsuds being implicated in these affairs,

which mostly took the form of clever ambushes. The Indian troops involved therein did not escape without some loss. On 23rd August occurred another episode of a like nature, in which armoured cars from Bannu intervened with success. These incidents were of importance in so far as they demonstrated how far the troops laboured under the handicap of a great lack of frontier experience and of want of intensive individual training. There came to light cases of neglect or of lack of skill in applying all the normal methods of protection necessary in hill warfare. Against experts in this class of fighting, such as the Mahsud and the Wazir, inadequate vigilance or carelessness is apt to be heavily penalized ; and so it now happened more than once. September and October went by quietly, less raiding being experienced, until, on 21st October, a convoy was very cleverly and heavily attacked by a Wazir *lashkar* 300 strong, near Khajuri. Its position was critical until the arrival of relief troops brought from Idak in motor vans. The Tochi then relapsed into a state of relative quiet.

Meanwhile, in Southern Waziristan there had been cause for rather more anxiety. This was only to be expected, since that region was more exposed to the full blast of Mahsud enmity and rapine. Throughout the summer and autumn, *lashkars* of Mahsuds and occasionally of Wazirs, ranging from 50 to perhaps 300, or sometimes even 500 to 700 strong, would come roaming through the border country and plundering whenever opportunity served. On the British side these raids could evoke little more than local counter-measures. So the months went by without serious military operations taking place, yet regularly punctuated by small protective or punitive enterprises. These sometimes developed into brilliant little exploits in which the raiders might suffer heavily.

But, unfortunately, it was more often the case, as happened in the Tochi, that lack of individual training and of frontier experience should tell against the troops. Regrettable incidents proved far more numerous than would ever have been considered pardonable or even possible prior to the Great War. The briefest survey of these events must suffice.

No sooner had Jandola been invested by a Mahsud *lashkar* towards the end of May than the raiding of the low-lying Wazir border country began. One party of 50 raiders was intercepted near Murtaza by a squadron of 27th Light Cavalry and routed with heavy loss. The effect of this incident, however small in itself, proved salutary. The Gumal police post was successfully evacuated on 30th May, whereas Draband and Kulachi were occupied by mixed detachments. On that day the post at Manjhi was reinforced by a column from Tank after repelling a Wazir *lashkar*. On 31st May the post at Girni was relieved from investment by some few hundred Mahsuds. On the other hand, the detachments of Frontier Constabulary at Domandi, Moghal Kot, Drazinda and Luni deserted, while the post at Chandwan was attacked and partially looted. At length in early June events in the Tochi permitted General Climo to turn his attention to the south, where the post of Jandola was still besieged and beginning to suffer from a lack of water. Three Indian infantry battalions were sent south, and a small force was thus able to leave Kirghi for Jandola on the 9th. The sole fact that the assembly of this column was becoming known had such effect that Jandola was reached without firing a shot. The little garrison of some 200 men was relieved none too soon, since the shortage of water, combined with a temperature of 115° F., was rendering the situation unbearable. After revictualling

the post and relieving the garrison, the column returned to Kirghi.

**Lawlessness increases.**—It now transpired that, in spite of the recent armistice, an Afghan detachment had reached Wana. It is true that it confined itself to a purely passive rôle, yet there could be no doubt as to its propagandist activity among the tribesmen. But the weather was now growing so intensely hot that all major operations were shortly brought to a standstill for a period of several weeks. Even the tribesmen suffered from the heat in the lower-lying districts. Nevertheless, on 11th June when it was learnt that the village of Drazinda was serving as a base for the Wazir raiders in these parts, an air raid was first of all carried out against it and the attack was followed by a ground operation which ended in the destruction of the village and the confiscation of 500 cattle.

In July information was received that the Wazirs had made their way along the Zhob Valley and captured a convoy as far upstream as Kapip. By assembling a small force at Murtaza, as though for the purpose of moving up the Gumal, General Climo succeeded in bringing about the return of the Wazir plunderers to their own country. But throughout the Derajat small raiding parties, varying from 50 to 200, were to remain active. They were never really brought to book, since they invariably made off when attacked, or even sooner, if they had come to apprehend any movement which might threaten their retreat.

In the middle of August, when the weather grew cooler, Mahsud raiders grew specially active and twice attacked the town of Tank, on the nights of the 14th and 15th. On the former occasion they carried off loot to the value of Rs.15,000. On the night of the 27th a Mahsud party penetrated into the post of Girni. Another *lashkar* of Shaman Khel Mahsuds, which had ventured as far as Isa Khel on the

Indus in the Mianwali district and captured 16 rifles, on its return to the hills during the night of the 29th stopped to attack a Labour Corps camp at Gambila. After a preliminary but transient success the raiders were ejected and pursued with heavy loss. September proved less eventful, but on the 19th there was a sharp engagement near Zarkani, in which a party of 27th Light Cavalry were surprised with casualties and loss of rifles. During early October a few minor engagements took place which again terminated unfavourably owing to faulty measures of protection. On the 5th a small mixed detachment covering some telephone repair work near Marighi was surprised and destroyed. On the next day a detachment composed of one squadron of cavalry and two companies of infantry was sent out to look for wounded survivors of the previous day's fighting. Insufficient precautions were taken when crossing broken ground. Suddenly the rear platoon was attacked and overwhelmed. The cavalry, now ordered to cover the withdrawal of the remaining infantry, not only failed to do so but left the infantry isolated. Sharp fighting resulted, in which the troops lost 3 officers and 80 other ranks. As a reprisal the villages near Wana, from which the *lashkar* was drawn, were heavily bombed by aeroplanes. These successes, however, only served to incite the tribesmen to yet bolder enterprises. On the 17th the water supply of Murtaza and neighbouring posts was destroyed, with the result that the column assembling at Kaur was forced to disperse. Beaten back with loss from Murtaza the same *lashkar* reached Girni on the 20th. Next day the tribesmen attacked a column of three companies accompanied by 2 guns, proceeding from Girni to Manzai, but a cleverly executed counter-attack routed the enemy with 70 casualties.

The frequency of the outrages committed by the Mahsuds



and Wazirs during this summer is best realised from a perusal of the official indictment of the tribes which was drawn up before the winter campaign began. From the outbreak of the Third Afghan War in May, 1919, until the beginning of November of that year, these crimes could be allocated as follows :—

*Tochi Wazirs.* Fifty raids and various offences resulting in British-Indian casualties : 30 killed, 60 wounded, 5 missing ; also a large quantity of loot in the shape of cattle, stores and money.

*Mahsuds.* Over 100 raids and various offences resulting in British-Indian casualties : 135 killed, 110 wounded, 38 missing ; also loot to the extent of 448 camels, 1674 cattle and property to the value of Rs.35,000.

*Wana Wazirs.* Thirty-two raids and various offences resulting in British-Indian casualties : 55 killed, 106 wounded, 83 missing ; also a large quantity of loot, including camels and cattle.

The fact that these offences were growing in gravity is shown by the statement of the casualties suffered by the Waziristan Force alone between the close of the Afghan War (8th August) and 2nd November. These amounted to 139 killed and 159 wounded. The time had now come for recourse to drastic measures for terminating this unending catalogue of violence and depredation.

## CHAPTER V

### THE OPENING OF THE WAZIRISTAN OPERATIONS, NOVEMBER, 1919

**Reasons for the elation of the Mahsuds.**—Over five months had gone by since the evacuation of the Tochi and Gumal posts. The course of events subsequent to those disastrous incidents was not calculated to lighten the task that lay before the Waziristan Force. Five months of relative immunity had raised the self-confidence of the Mahsuds in particular to an unwonted pitch. This state of self-satisfaction was greatly enhanced by three additional but substantial reasons :—

- (i) The tribesmen realised to the full many of the difficulties facing the Government of India. They had gained tangible proof of the diminished value of the Army in India, its more inexperienced officers and its less effective training. It was, indeed, impossible to deny that the Mahsuds had scored several distinct minor successes over the military forces opposed to them during the preceding summer. Further, they were to begin the campaign with a great feeling of elation, due to the failure of the British aircraft to force them into submission.
- (ii) The number of deserters from the Waziristan Militias and of ex-soldiers of the regular Indian Army, who were to be found amongst them, was

large. This total has been calculated at over 1800. Not only would the presence of these men greatly influence the tactics of the tribesmen in action, but their knowledge of the habits and routine of the Indian troops opposed to them would prove of great value and a source of much confidence in the class of warfare in which the tribesmen excelled.

- (iii) Only less serious was the quantity of rifles, not to mention service ammunition, that had been carried over to the tribesmen by the Waziristan militiamen, when the Tochi and Gumal posts were lost. It is believed that over 2500 rifles and 800,000 rounds of S.A. ammunition had thus come into their possession. A few Lewis guns and many grenades had also been captured by them.

Moral elation was consequently reinforced by a considerable increase of fighting power.

On the other hand, the Wazirs and Mahsuds had no real grounds for believing that they would receive any material support from Afghanistan. In October many of the *maliks* remembered the promises made to them by the Afghan leader, Nadir Khan, to the effect that the peace terms to be demanded by the Amir from the Indian Government would contain an amnesty for all those tribes which had supported the Afghan cause. They then turned to Kabul; they were invited to that city and received by the Amir in person. The latter flattered and cajoled the deputation, but gave its members no cause for supposing that he proposed to take up arms in their favour. On the contrary, he advised them to come to terms with the

Indian Government. Nevertheless, the Amir did not withdraw his agents from Waziristan, and it must also be admitted that the Mahsuds and Wazirs did eventually, on a specific occasion, receive the actual support of a few Afghan troops with two mountain guns. At the moment the *maliks* were much pleased with their reception and returned apparently convinced that hostilities between the late belligerents would be resumed. However that may be, the Mahsuds as a whole were in no wise dissuaded from continuing their bellicose attitude, nor did they attempt to propitiate the Government of India. Unabashed they preserved their defiant attitude.

**Scale and duration of the proposed operations.**—The authorities at Simla, having their hands more or less free since the conclusion of peace with the Afghans, could at length turn their attention to the despatch of a considerable force into Waziristan, for such an enterprise could no longer be delayed. It was impossible to permit the lowland population to be harassed by perpetual raids which were often tainted with symptoms of callous cruelty. Also, there was urgent need to obviate any evil effects which a continued display of Wazir and Mahsud lawlessness might exercise among the various other border tribes. Finally, the prestige of the Government, no less than that of the Indian Army, had been shaken by the events that had occurred since the previous month of May. It was, therefore, of the utmost importance that everything should be done to revive the wholesome feelings of respect which British rule and power had formerly evoked. The first consideration was to decide upon the scale and duration of the military operations to be undertaken. Events had long shown that the policy hitherto pursued with regard to Waziristan stood in need of revision.

Some authorities were now advocating a permanent occupation and administration of Waziristan right up to the Durand Line, basing their opinion on recent events on the Afghan borders and on the continued presence of Afghan adventurers in Waziristan, who were still intriguing among the tribes. But apart from the question as to whether this extreme view should be adopted or not, it was agreed that circumstances demanded an important display of force. Any risk of failure or manifestation of weakness was to be carefully avoided. For this very reason the Waziristan Force had been held in leash for so long, since the Government had wisely determined to stay its hand until the moment should have arrived to strike, and to strike hard in case of a further contumacious attitude on the part of the tribes. To achieve this purpose it was determined neither to take any military action nor to present any ultimatum to the Mahsuds and Wazirs until the Government should be in the best position to enforce its demands by adequate and swift retribution in case of refusal. Reasons enough, however, existed for not contemplating an expedition on the grand scale into Waziristan with any ultimate object of a permanent occupation of the country. A more modest line of action was therefore, in the end, determined upon. The formal submission of all three principal tribes of Waziristan was to remain the main object of the operations. Punitive military operations were sanctioned, but only as a last resort, to attain that object.

**The terms to be placed before the tribes of Waziristan.—** The procedure to be adopted was the following. The Tochi Wazirs, Mahsuds and Wana Wazirs were each in turn to be summoned to a ceremonial *jirga* at which a Government ultimatum should be laid before them. In this pronouncement were to be comprised :—

- (i) A statement to the effect that no foundation existed for the belief of the tribes that the Amir of Afghanistan had secured an amnesty for any Wazir or Mahsud outrages ; further, that there was no question of any part of Waziristan being handed over to the Amir.
- (ii) A demand for compensation and reparation for all damage caused by Wazir and Mahsud raids.
- (iii) A declaration as to the Government's intention to construct roads and maintain troops in any part of the "protected area," i.e. a belt of country taken along the east and south of Waziristan. (This area was defined in the ultimatum.)

The last-named proviso foreshadowed the maintenance of one brigade in Northern and Southern Waziristan respectively, probably at Miranshah and at Sarwekai. The roads in contemplation comprised the following : (a) Thal to Idak ; (b) Khirgi to Sarwekai ; (c) Sarwekai to (i) Tanai—with an ultimate extension to Wana—also (ii) to Khajuri Kach ; (d) Murtaza to Khajuri Kach—with a prospective extension into the Zhob Valley. It is important to note that this demand entailed the virtual cession of the Shahur Valley, and more particularly of the long defile, known as Shahur Tangi, to the Government of India. This last condition proved quite distasteful to the Mahsuds, who considered they might thereby be surrendering one of the natural gateways into their country. It may be regarded as not improbable that the determination of the Government to insist upon the control of this Shahur route contributed to some large extent towards the eventual rejection of the terms by the Mahsuds. This, however, is anticipating the sequence of events.

In order to translate the Government policy into action these steps were taken :—

- (a) On 3rd November the Mahsuds were summoned to Khirgi, where the conditions (given in Appendix I) were laid before them. An answer, to be made at Khirgi, was demanded by the 11th of that month.
- (b) On 9th November the Tochi Wazirs were summoned to Miranshah, where similar conditions were made known to them. In this case, however, a column of troops was to advance to Datta Khel, where the tribesmen's answer was to be given on the 17th.

In either case, a refusal of the conditions was to be followed by systematic aerial bombardment, and this, in turn, by punitive military operations. In such an event it was proposed to take action against the Tochi Wazirs first and against the Mahsuds next. The Wana Wazirs were to be dealt with later, since it was thought best that any possible refusal of the terms to be set before them should be followed by instant punishment without the delay that more hasty procedure might entail. In accordance with the above programme a " Striking Force " completed its concentration at Miranshah by 8th November, in readiness to support by military measures the ultimatum presented to the Tochi Wazirs.

It is, however, time to consider, first, what military and aerial forces the Government caused to assemble with a view to carrying out its plan of action ; secondly, how it was designed to employ the forces thus brought together.

**The composition of the Waziristan Force in November, 1919.**—The Waziristan Force remained much the same as had been placed under the orders of Major-General S. H. Climo at the end of May, 1919. But it had been very

considerably reinforced until it now comprised the following fighting troops :—

4 Indian cavalry regiments.

1 section 4·5 howitzers (for Tochi Valley only).

No. 6 (British) mountain battery (3·7 howitzer battery for Derajat only).

3 Indian mountain batteries.

3 companies sappers and miners.

6 Indian infantry brigades.

4 additional battalions.

Also 52nd Wing, Royal Air Force.

The total strength of these troops on 13th November was :—

Combatants	.	.	.	29,256
Non-combatants	.	.	.	34,987

But the eventual *daily average* strength was increased to :—

Combatants	.	.	.	41,800	} approximately.
Non-combatants	.	.	.	37,900	

The mass of transport animals required to permit of an advance of such a large expedition into difficult mountain country was transferred to the Waziristan Force after the conclusion of peace with Afghanistan.

**The Striking Force.**—With the exception of staffs, aerial contingent, one mountain battery (equipped with the new 3·7 howitzer) and a few specialists, the Waziristan Force consisted of Indian troops and followers with their normal establishment of British officers. It is important to note that this was the first frontier campaign of any magnitude in which so few British troops, and particularly no British infantry, participated. A very small number of units were allotted exclusively either to the Tochi operations or to the advance up the Tank Zam, these being chiefly cavalry



and immobile artillery units. The Tochi offered more level going than Southern Waziristan, and favoured the use of mounted troops, but the bulk of the cavalry was allotted to the Lines of Communication in the lowlands where horsemen could most profitably be employed to deal with raiding parties. Immobile artillery was used to strengthen fixed posts on the Lines of Communication. The special units allotted to the Force included: a pack wireless section, a photo section, a survey section, 2 mobile pigeon lofts. The Lines of Communication units included some armoured motor batteries, a few (immobile) Stokes' mortars and wireless stations. Each battalion of the Force received 16 Lewis guns and 16 rifle grenade discharge cups. The transport of the Force was on an augmented scale, since the troops marched on the winter scale of clothing with tents. In addition, there was carried for each man:— one extra blanket, extra pair of boots and extra pair of socks. A large amount of engineer stores, such as barbed wire, stakes, explosives and a large reserve of ammunition was taken. The supply column carried four days' supplies.

The Royal Air Force unit allocated to the expedition was the 52nd Wing (now 1st (Indian) Wing), R.A.F., distributed as below:—

At Dera Ismail Khan . H.Q. of Wing.

At Mianwali: 1 flight, No. 97 Squadron and No. 99 Squadron, comprising 3 D.H.10 machines and 9 D.H.9.A.

At Bannu and Tank: No. 20 Squadron—18 Bristol Fighters (1 flight only at Tank).

In addition to being entrusted with the actual conduct of the operations, the Waziristan Force was made responsible for the safety and protection of the entire region

lying west of the River Indus, between Kalabagh in the north and the boundary of the Dera Ghazi Khan district in the south. The whole system of Lines of Communication, extending to 300 or 400 miles in length, on which the Waziristan Force was to depend during its operations lay within these limits. In view of the real risk that existed of Wazir and Mahsud raids penetrating well into this immense area—a contingency which actually materialized—the burden was not negligible. The consequent duties of protection devolving on the Force were thus to absorb a considerable number of troops.

Accordingly, out of the imposing array of units allotted to General Climo only about one-half were finally available for actual offensive operations; but finally it was not expedient to employ even this total in first line. A "Striking Force" was therefore organized which was normally composed of:—

- 2 mountain batteries.
- 1 coy. sappers and miners.
- 1 signal coy.
- 1 battalion pioneers.
- 2 brigades of infantry (6 to 8 battalions).
- 1 Indian field ambulance.
- 1 combined field ambulance.
- 1 bearer unit.
- 1 supply column.

These troops were placed under the command of Major-General A. Skeen, C.M.G. The two infantry brigades were the 43rd, commanded by Brigadier-General G. Gwyn-Thomas, C.M.G., etc., and the 67th, commanded by Brigadier-General F. G. Lucas, C.B., etc. When the Striking Force completed its first assembly under the designation of the "Tochi Column" at Miranshah on

# LAHORE

*Broad Gauge  
(5ft. 6in.)  
Railway*

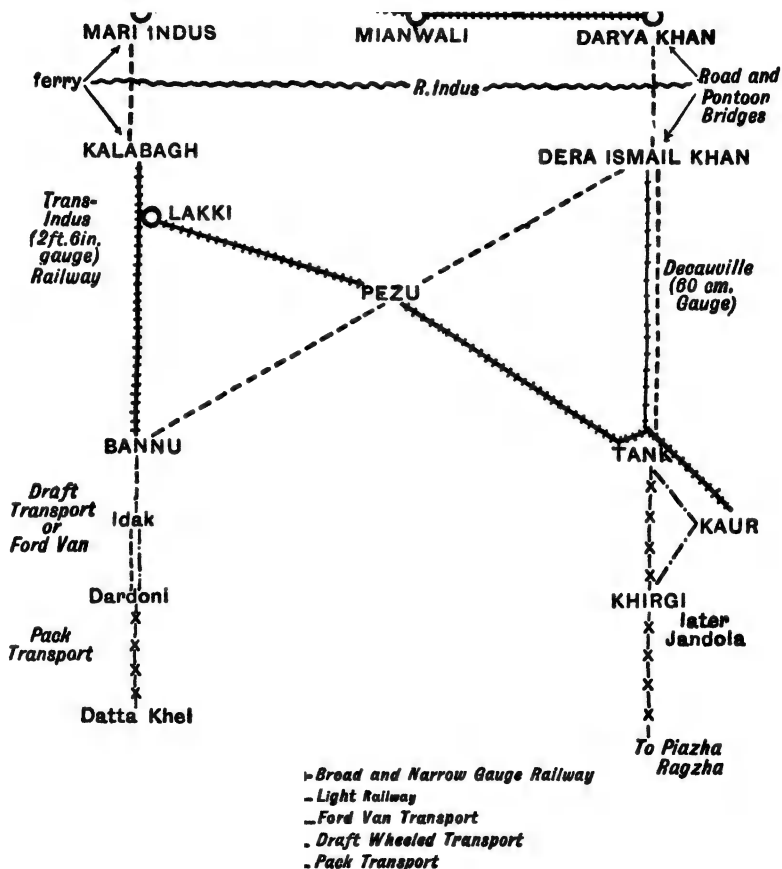


DIAGRAM OF COMMUNICATIONS.

8th November, its strength on that date (in round figures) was :—

Officers and O.R. . . . .	8500
Followers . . . . .	6500
Horses and equipment animals . . .	1400

Together with transport animals :—

Camels . . . . .	5000
Mules . . . . .	2300

The remainder of the Waziristan Force, together with all special and administrative troops and services, was retained for protective, transport and supply duties on the Lines of Communication. These, in the necessary order of things, form a substantial drain on any frontier expedition. In the present case, in view of the greater amount of equipment, ammunition, stores and impediments which were to be carried by the Force, the task devolving upon the defence and transport troops along the Lines of Communication was not likely to prove any lighter than in the past.

**The Lines of Communication.**—The communications of the Waziristan Force were somewhat complicated and merit attention, as they explain many of the difficulties attending operations in Waziristan at all times. The ultimate base of the Waziristan Force was situated at Lahore, whence the normal broad gauge (5 ft. 6 in.) Indian railway system extends to the River Indus. A main line runs parallel to the left bank of that river, keeping generally some 10 to 20 miles distant from its normal channel. Railhead for the Waziristan expedition was at Darya Khan, situated opposite to Dera Ismail Khan. Both towns lie well away from the Indus. Eighty miles north of Darya Khan another spur of the railway runs to Mari Indus,

situated on the very edge of the river and opposite Kalabagh on its right bank. Between Mari and Darya Khan, but nearer to Mari, lies Mianwali, the station for an important base of the Royal Air Force units allotted to the Waziristan Force. Neither at Mari nor at Darya Khan has the Indus been bridged, and a break in the communications thus occurs. In the north, between Mari and Kalabagh, situated less than a mile apart, a ferry has been established, and at the latter town stands the terminus of the Trans-Indus narrow-gauge (2 ft. 6 in.) railway. Stores were therefore unloaded and reloaded on to the narrow-gauge rolling stock at Mari Indus. The latter trucks were then ferried over the river, six or seven at a time, to Kalabagh, there to be placed on the Trans-Indus line. As an alternative the stores could be loaded on to the narrow-gauge trucks at Kalabagh after first being conveyed by pontoon across the river.

**The railway.**—From Kalabagh the Trans-Indus railway runs eastwards for 50 miles to Lakki (Marwat). Here it forks, the northern branch reaching Bannu (30 miles), the southern going to Tank—with an extension to Kaur Bridge (50 miles).

**Roads.**—From Darya Khan stores were conveyed to Dera Ismail Khan by wheeled transport, the road across the sandy Indus River bed being laid with grass, while pontoon bridges stretched across its shrunken channels. This entire journey was some 15 miles long, but the changeable character of the river-bed might render the actual time of crossing a variable quantity. From Dera Ismail Khan radiates the main road system of the Derajat on the right bank of the Indus. Included in this system was the direct main road leading to Tank. Along this road was laid a .60 cm. Decauville railway which encroached somewhat upon the width, but largely increased the

capacity of the road, thus saving animal transport. Some 40 miles east of Dera Ismail Khan a subsidiary base was established at Saggu to serve for any minor operations that might be necessary against the Sherannis. A serious deficiency in this road system was the absence of lateral communications and of a direct road between Bannu and Tank. Troops, indeed, could march by road from Bannu to Pezu, whence they could proceed alongside the railway line to Tank, but the going on this latter stretch was sandy and heavy, whilst the country was almost waterless. Vehicles were obliged to go round by Dera Ismail Khan, a detour of 80 miles. Any large movement of troops between the Tochi and the Tank Zam Valley thus constituted a serious undertaking. A further defect in this system was the lack of any road leading out from Kalabagh.

**Pack transport.**—Animal transport, both draft and pack, thus came to play a most important part in the work of the expedition. Forward of Tank pack transport alone could be employed, and as many as 4000 pack animals would constitute one single convoy. It became imperative, therefore, to marshal convoys on as broad a front as possible. Accordingly, the camel tracks up the Tank Zam Valley were doubled, as had been done in the summer of 1917, when this had proved of great assistance. This fact necessitated much road making or improving. But roads were not the only source of difficulty, for rinderpest and foot-and-mouth disease subsequently made considerable inroads into the available resources of transport animals.

**Mechanical transport.**—Fortunately, it was found possible to allot six mechanical transport companies of Ford vans to the expedition. These companies first worked above Bannu, where the "track" was improved to admit of their use, but a motor road was shortly constructed from Mauzai (above Tank) to Kirghi, and eventually extended

to Jandola ; the Ford vans thus also worked on this stretch. The percentage of vans continually under repair was high. The daily number in workshops amounted to 12, 14, 15, 29, 40 and 65 per cent of the strength of each of the six companies, which managed to work on a basis of 75 per cent fit cars on the road. They certainly rendered most valuable service.

It will be seen that in advance of the broad-gauge railway there existed no method of forwarding stores and supplies to the front without change of means of transport, even after the passage of the Indus. Thus, forward of

(1) *Bannu*—the system of transport was the following :—

Bannu to Idak . . . Draft animal wheeled transport.

Idak to Dardoni . . . (a) Ford vans on the road, or  
(b) Mule and camel pack transport on camel track.

Dardoni to Datta Khel . . . Do.

(2) *Tank* :—

Kaur Bridge to Khirgi . Ford vans on the road.

Tank to Khirgi . . . Mule and camel pack transport on camel track.

Khirgi to Piazhia Ragzha . . . Do.

Forward of Datta Khel and Piazhia Ragzha the Striking Force would be employing its own transport (pack mule and camel). It should be noted that between Khirgi and Piazhia Ragzha the going was bad in places, and that, in consequence, it was necessary to work camels on a  $\frac{3}{4}$  basis (instead of the normal  $\frac{6}{7}$ ), and to allow 18 per cent for casualties and lameness. The road for wheeled traffic leading to Datta Khel was also bad, being virtually unfit for military traffic unless improved.

The daily capacity of these communications under normal conditions might be assessed as follows :—

The Trans-Indus railway (to Bannu and Tank together)	Tons.	Men.	Sheep.
could deal with an average of	600	200	—
Or a maximum of . . . . .	680	180	—
The Decauville Line from Dera Ismail Khan to Tank could deal with an average of . . . . .	160	100	1600

These lines were used for conveying the above total of supplies, stores and reinforcements daily throughout the campaign. The main line of supply for the expedition was through Kalabagh.

This entire network of communications, together with its system of transport, cannot be said to have erred on the side either of completeness or of simplicity; but there was no alternative. The situation of Kalabagh, owing to the absence of roads and of trunk telephones leading thereto, was quite unsatisfactory. The headquarters of the Lines of Communication were, therefore, moved as soon as possible to Dera Ismail Khan, which, indeed, became the permanent headquarters of the Waziristan Force. Had it not been for the Decauville line laid from Dera Ismail Khan to Tank, as well as for the arrival of the six Ford van companies, it might have proved impossible to keep the force supplied with all its requirements in advance of Tank. In June and July the annual rise of the Indus would have further complicated matters, owing to the interruption of the pontoon bridges and ferries. This contingency, however, as it did not affect the operations, may be ignored in the present case. But it may be noted that, in the event of any future operations becoming necessary in Waziristan during the summer months, the possibility of carrying on a serious campaign in that region would seem to depend largely on the construction of a broad-gauge railway bridge at Kalabagh.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SUBMISSION OF THE TOCHI WAZIRS

**The terms presented to the Tochi Wazirs.**—In accordance with the ultimatum placed before the Tochi Wazir representatives at the *jirga* held at Miranshah on 9th November, the Striking Force, three days later, began its movement towards Datta Khel. It was at this place that the Tochi Wazirs had been summoned to make known their answer to the Government's terms. The advance was made in three echelons. The first of these consisted of the bulk of the combatant troops; the second had been formed mainly for the purpose of improving the road with a view to its use by the Ford vans: the third, composed principally of an infantry brigade, was told off to post piquets along the road so as to secure the convoys. No opposition was encountered, and on the 14th Datta Khel was reached after an easy march occupying three days. Reserve stores and supplies were collected at that spot without delay in the possible event of punitive operations becoming necessary in the Upper Tochi. Notices were dropped by aeroplanes over all villages, warning the inhabitants that a rejection of the Government terms would be followed by aerial bombardment. General Climo himself arrived at Datta Khel on the 17th, and on the same day met the Tochi Wazir *jirga* which was fully representative of all the tribes except for the Madda Khel and two minor sub-tribes of the Kaitu Valley. The Tochi Wazir *maliks* accepted the terms without reservation, and there ap-

peared sufficient grounds for believing their decision to be sincere. Never before had a Wazir *jirga* assembled in so submissive a mood. Subsequent events proved that this attitude was genuine.

**Their submission.**—The villages of the recalcitrant Madda Khel were bombed by seventeen aeroplanes next day, and the *maliks* of that section arrived to make their complete submission the same evening. Two minor sub-tribes of the Kaitu Valley, that had not sent their *maliks* to the *jirga* of the 17th, were not dealt with until the following month when one day's aerial bombardment effectually brought them to a more amenable frame of mind.

The complete submission of the Tochi Wazirs, so easily obtained, was of considerable service in simplifying the task set before the Waziristan Force. In addition, it greatly cleared the air with regard to any probable Afghan interference or intrigue either in the Tochi or Kaitu Valleys. In every way it allowed more freedom of action to the commander of the force. The selection of the Tochi Valley as the first objective of the campaign, even though it was to some extent facilitated by, if not a consequence of, the original assembly of the troops, was thus thoroughly justified. Moreover, the resistance of the Tochi Wazirs, had it materialized, might have been expected to prove less stubborn than that of the Mahsuds, and so would have offered a favourable opportunity of initiating inexperienced troops into the peculiarities of frontier warfare. Transport and supply problems would also have lent themselves to a simpler solution than in the Tank Zam Valley, thereby facilitating the operations. The desire to give very raw troops a foretaste of active service in mountainous country had largely influenced the plan of operations which it had been proposed to carry out in case of need in the Tochi Valley. That plan comprised

not less than two punitive marches, each to be carried out by a single brigade soon after the arrival of the Striking Force at Datta Khel. One brigade was to spend six days in proceeding to Inzar Kach and Bibi, while, after its return, another brigade would have set out for a five days' march to Sheranni. This programme, owing to the quiet behaviour of the Tochi Wazirs, was now reduced to a march by the entire Striking Force through the Madda Khel country which had not been traversed by regular troops since 1897. Such a demonstration would further have been of great value in showing the various Tochi tribes that their country was not inaccessible to regular troops, a result that was in itself highly desirable in view of the decision not to reoccupy the Upper Tochi posts at that moment.

**The defiance of the Mahsuds.**—But in the meantime the Mahsuds at the *jirga* held at Kirghi on 11th November had categorically rejected the Government terms. In consequence of their defiant attitude a daily and systematic aerial bombardment of the Mahsud country had been undertaken and was to be continued. Nevertheless, it was considered imperative to support this action by effective military measures. In accordance with this decision the expedition into Southern Waziristan was to be undertaken without further delay. Moreover, the political authorities, in addition to urging the need for rapidity of action in dealing with the Mahsuds, expressed their disapproval of any troops being sent at this juncture so near the frontier of Afghanistan. The scheme of marching through the Madda Khel country was thus abandoned. It should be added that the conduct of the Tochi Wazirs remained satisfactory throughout the subsequent campaign against the Mahsuds. Attempts were unquestionably made either by Afghan emissaries

or by Afghan officials in Khost to stir up mischief along the Tochi. On the whole, all such intrigues were quite unsuccessful. A few raids took place, it is true, but these were of no intrinsic importance. The policy pursued with regard to the Tochi Wazirs thus proved correct. The continued presence of an adequate regular garrison at Bannu and at Miranshah, together with the maintenance of a movable column or so at those places, was found to be an adequate safeguard against any serious trouble throughout the Tochi Wazir and Daur country. The Tochi Wazirs do not, consequently, enter any further into the discussion of the present campaign.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MAHSUDS

**Alternative lines of advance.**—With the Striking Force situated at Datta Khel in the Tochi Valley, two alternative routes into the Mahsud country offered themselves to the commander of the Waziristan Force :—

- (i) To advance on Makin, the second most important centre of the Mahsuds, over the Razmak Narai (Pass) direct from Datta Khel ; this route from the latter place being equivalent to a distance of little more than 30 miles.
- (ii) To withdraw the Striking Force from the Tochi and to advance from Tank westwards or northwards up the Shahur or the Tank Zam Valley.

However attractive the shortness of the distance may have rendered the route over the Razmak Narai, it was discarded for the following reasons :—

- (a) It entailed crossing the pass at an elevation of 7000 feet, which in winter meant traversing it in snow.
- (b) The construction of a camel track through difficult country would become unavoidable.
- (c) There was a scarcity of water along this route.
- (d) Suitable camping grounds for so large a force would have been difficult to find.
- (e) It would involve the protection of a Line of Communication from Bannu nearly 100 miles in length.

- (f) It was hoped that the appearance of a large force at Jandola, combined with the daily aerial bombardment then in progress, might bring the Mahsuds to submission in the same way as the Tochi Wazirs.

On the other hand, the Tank Zam route involved certain disadvantages :—

- (1) It almost doubled the length of route to Kaniguram and Makin through avowedly hostile country.
- (2) It led through difficult gorges where the Striking Force might readily be delayed.
- (3) The Tochi Column would in the first place require to be transferred to Jandola via Pezu and Dera Ismail Khan, a laborious process.
- (4) A number of troops would, in any case, have to be retained in the Tochi Valley for observation of, and protection against, possible Wazir or Afghan raids.

In spite of these disadvantages, should the resistance of the Mahsuds turn out to be either negligible or readily overcome, the Striking Force would be in a better position to proceed from the Tank Zam Valley, with no further complication and little lengthening of the Lines of Communication, to deal with the Wana Wazirs. The Shahur route was, from the outset, discarded as not leading directly into the heart of the Mahsud country. Consequently, it was decided to transfer the Striking Force to the valley of the Tank Zam.

On 26th November the troops were back at Dardoni, again marching in three echelons. On the following day the Striking Force, which had been styled the "Tochi Column," was rechristened the "Derajat Column," and

it then shed those very few units that were to remain with the garrisons of the Lower Tochi Valley (see page 71). The march to Khirgi and Tank via Pezu was then carried out in nine groups, each approximately two battalions strong with additional transport ; the distance so covered was 132 miles. On 13th December the concentration of the Derajat Column had been completed in the area Tank-Jandola. The headquarters of the Force were installed at Dera Ismail Khan, and the Lines of Communication defence and supply units began work from the bases of Kalabagh and Dera Ismail Khan to Tank and to Khirgi.

**The original plan of operations.**—The plan of operations which was now to be carried out by the Derajat Column had been elaborated throughout the summer of 1919. The headquarters of the Waziristan Force had been engaged during these months in preparing and modifying a definite scheme calculated to meet the varying circumstances of the situation of the moment. But, as must always be the case in uncivilized warfare, the many unknown factors in the problem seriously hampered any attempt at formulating a cut-and-dried project far in advance. Then again the question was complicated by two considerations that lay altogether outside the Mahsud question proper, namely :—

- (i) The period of time which it might be found necessary to sacrifice, before invading the Mahsud country, in order to bring the Tochi Wazirs to submission.
- (ii) The urgent necessity of attempting to deal with the Wana Wazirs before the beginning of the hot weather of 1920, yet after the defeat of the Mahsuds.

The solution of the Mahsud problem was thus cramped,

so to speak, at either extremity. The reversal of these two conditions might have greatly simplified the question, but this was impossible.

**The plan modified with the course of events.**—In view of existing probabilities the original plan, propounded during the summer, had been drawn up so as to allow for the Tochi operations continuing well on into January ; in fact, the operations against the Mahsuds had not been timed to begin until the fourth week of January. This latter enterprise, moreover, had been reckoned as likely to last between seven and nine weeks. On this computation there would still have remained sufficient time in April and May, before the setting in of the heat, to deal with the Wana Wazirs. Political, military and financial considerations all united to render a short campaign highly desirable, while the need of effecting the earliest possible settlement with all the three tribes was so obvious as to need no discussion. The above rough outline was slightly modified at various times, until the unexpectedly meek attitude of the Tochi Wazirs in November enabled a considerable acceleration of the programme to be made. The expedition against the Mahsuds was thus initiated no less than five weeks before the original date fixed for that event.

**The march up the Tank Zam Valley.**—The plan of operations against the Mahsuds that held the field in December, 1919, was, roughly, the following. The Striking Force was to march up the Tank Zam Valley in three stages as far as Dwa Toi, this being the confluence of the Baddar Toi and Dara Toi streams. These three stages had been calculated as ending approximately at Ghurlama Kach (near Kotkai), Shilmanzai Kach (near Sora Rogha) and Dwa Toi. At the end of the first two stages a halt was to be made for the collection of ten days' supplies before



embarking on the next stage. A similar storage of supplies was to be arranged at Dwa Toi. From Dwa Toi ten days were to be devoted to punitive marches to Kaniguram and in the valleys of the Baddar Toi and Murgha Algad ; another seven days were to be absorbed by similar operations up the Dashkai and Tauda China valleys in the Makin district. Throughout these whole operations the Derajat Column was to carry seven days' supplies, thus giving it a radius of action of three clear days anywhere off the line of march. The return to Jandola would then occupy another seven days. The absence of the column from Jandola might thus, given favourable conditions, have lasted less than seven weeks, but was, in any case, not estimated as likely to be longer than two and a half months. On this basis there would have appeared adequate time to bring the Wana Wazirs to submission before the middle of May.

**The adoption of a single or multiple line of advance.—**The actual mode of advance up the Tank Zam Valley depended on several main considerations of a joint political and military consideration. The first question was the selection of the ultimate objective or objectives that would satisfy the purposes of the expedition. Secondly, it had to be decided whether the advance should be made either in a single column, or by several columns working on parallel, convergent or divergent lines. Thirdly, there was urgent need to determine from the outset how far devastation of land and property, reprisals or other punitive measures should be enforced during the advance. This matter was, of course, dependent again on the policy finally to be pursued by the Government in dealing with the entire Mahsud problem. Lastly, there was also need to study the methods to be adopted, if necessary, to disguise the intentions of the Force or, on the contrary,

to attract the enemy into resisting its advance. These various topics require individual elucidation.

(i) *The ultimate objective or objectives which would satisfy the purposes of the expedition.* This at first sight might not appear a difficult matter. The chief end of the Waziristan Force was unquestionably the punishment of the Mahsuds, not only as a penalty for past offences, but also as a deterrent against future outrages. Nevertheless, the entire plan of operations against the Mahsuds was to some extent hampered by the prevalent uncertainty as to the eventual policy to be adopted with regard to Waziristan, perhaps one of the most difficult of all the problems confronting the Government of India. The best method of pacifying these inaccessible mountaineers and of curing their lawless habits was one upon which the most experienced frontier officers had for many years agreed to differ. It was not to be expected that the Government of India and H.M. Government in London, both, at the moment, absorbed with weighty, post-war economic and political problems, could very readily come to a decision on the seemingly very minor issue of Waziristan. Should the country be occupied and administered, or should it be punished and then left to its own devices as in earlier days? There were serious arguments to be adduced on either side; for a long time they had already been freely discussed. Perhaps, if the Government policy had been definitely settled before 1919 and made known to the military chiefs, the task of the latter would have been simpler. Past experience tended to show that the military purpose of any further expedition against the Mahsuds, if it were to be final, must infallibly reside in some form of occupation, disarmament or even the complete administration of that country. It would appear natural that some such belief inspired the military conduct

of the ensuing operations. As the campaign progressed, the belief seemed to grow into a conviction and revealed itself more clearly.

Whatever the final decision was to be, in December, 1919, the need for a speedy termination of the campaign remained paramount. It may, therefore, be asserted with confidence that the Derajat Column set out from Jandola with the intention of :—

- (a) Making its way into the very heart of the Mahsud country at Kaniguram and Makin, subject only to the Mahsuds making a complete and genuine submission before the arrival of the troops at these places.
- (b) Remaining in the vicinity of these places, or at least in the Tank Zam Valley, until the Mahsuds should have made such submission.
- (c) Levying fines for past offences—by force, if necessary.
- (d) Recovering lost rifles.

(ii) *The question whether a single column or parallel, convergent or divergent columns were to be adopted.* In November, 1894, Sir William Lockhart had crossed Waziristan from end to end with three separate columns, which suffered only 23 casualties. Again, in the winter of 1901-2, an entire series of operations had been carried out against the Mahsuds by actually divergent columns with considerable success (see pages 32-3). Nevertheless, it was now urged that the armament of the Mahsuds had undergone so great a change as to render an advance of separate columns of doubtful expediency. Rifles of range and precision in the hands of the tribesmen would, it was stated, infallibly render more hazardous the movements of small columns which might find themselves isolated in those steep and rocky valleys. It was true that, although

the Afridis in Tirah had been known to adopt such a course, the Mahsuds had never before shown any inclination to concentrate their *lashkars* and to attack detached columns. The uncivilized belligerent has, as a rule, shown little disposition to follow the dictates of any such strategic conception. But it was now held that the possession and skilled use of small-bore rifles by such determined and audacious fighting men as the Mahsuds in a difficult mountain region had enormously increased the risks entailed by any dispersal of fighting power. That this opinion should have been so strongly advocated, seems to show plainly that both Army Headquarters and the Staff of the Waziristan Force realised the more doubtful quality of the troops composing the Derajat Column.

How far a policy of possible dispersion of force might have been adopted if more experienced troops had been available, is not germane to the present narration of the campaign. It became manifest, soon after the expedition set out, that there was no alternative but to rely on a liberal employment of artillery and on a lavish expenditure of ammunition and of engineer stores to counterbalance the initial lack of skill displayed by the troops. This fact illustrates the extent to which it may become necessary to study the limitations of the troops in planning an expedition to be carried out under conditions where the capacity of the transport constitutes a dominant factor. The greater the skill and mobility of the troops, the smaller the amount of stores and of transport required, and the greater the resultant freedom of action in the conduct of the operations. This campaign thus provides no precedent for the opinion that separate or divergent columns should not be employed again in uncivilized warfare. There are manifest advantages in splitting up a large column where the enemy is divided into tribal sections, which,

as experience has shown, will either decline to coalesce or refuse to leave the vicinity of their own homes. The crux of the question reduces itself, first, to a matter of judgment as to taking risks and, secondly, to a consideration of the fighting superiority of the invading troops. But the matter is equally dependent on the amount of available transport and on the capacity of the Lines of Communication employed. Several columns will inevitably end by requiring more transport, and by absorbing more troops for the protection of supply convoys. With the growth of these rearward services and of their protective troops, there arises a need for larger staffs, more hospitals and so forth. This state of affairs was most clearly illustrated in the South African War.

In the case of the Waziristan expedition, there was every reason to adopt a single column owing to the lack of experience of the troops. But, in addition, the decision to advance in a single column became inevitable for the simple reason that owing to the increased volume of ammunition, defence materials, clothing and medical stores carried by the troops, the amount of transport required for the maintenance of the Striking Force had grown to such dimensions as to absorb all the available transport that could be placed at its disposal for the entire conduct of the campaign. The transport would not have sufficed for the more complicated plan of advance in several columns.

(iii) *The policy to be adopted with regard to devastation of land and property, confiscation of goods and reprisals.* In common with all other peoples in a similar stage of social development, the Mahsuds possessed no organic centres, the destruction of which could so far impair their economic or social welfare as would infallibly bring them to their knees. Makin, one of their main centres of population,

in addition to countless other villages, had been devastated during previous campaigns by way of punitive retaliation, yet such measures had never effectually put an end to their perennial acts of brigandage. Fines had been levied, but the tribesmen had continued to retrieve such losses by plundering their weaker neighbours. Rifles had been confiscated (!), yet in the end this measure seemed only to encourage further thefts and murders in order to replace the (not numerous) surrendered weapons. There is a point beyond which reprisals cannot be carried without provoking undue exasperation or else bringing the subjects of this treatment to partial starvation, unless, indeed, the regular forces imitate the Germans when they methodically drove the Hottentots into the Omaheke Desert—there to die of thirst. But on the frontier, even apart from the ethical side of the question, such action is not practicable. As a case in point, in June, 1917, when time was of great importance, General Beynon retired down the Shahur Valley in order to allow the Mahsuds to resume the cultivation of their scanty *kaches*. The success of any punitive expedition is best gauged by the permanence of the moral impression which it leaves on the uncivilized mind. If this impression is adequate and comprehensible without proving excessive, a cessation of the misconduct that had provoked the expedition will ensue. The Pathan understands and accepts reprisals in the due order of things. Yet in the case of the Mahsuds punitive expeditions had failed to cause the desired moral impression for any length of time.

**The policy to be adopted towards the Mahsuds.**—On this occasion it was decided that the Mahsuds should be afforded every opportunity to submit without the application of coercive measures. Contumacy, however, would be punished by drastic destruction of property. The

present plan of operations was consequently based far less upon the idea of devastating the country and of burning villages than had previously been the case in punitive operations conducted on this frontier, although strong towers and defences were to be demolished should necessity arise. The Derajat Column thus set out with the intention of bringing the Mahsuds to submission rather by the mere display of force, by its application in battle and by the strongest possible moral pressure than by ravaging the country. It was not, in fact, until the Striking Force had nearly reached Dwa Toi that resort was made to devastation, and then only when all other attempts to bring the Mahsuds to submission had failed. It must be remembered that any extensive ravaging of a country involves a possible dispersal of force over a wide area. In Waziristan, if the comparison between that country and the south-eastern counties of England made in Chapter II be pursued, the march of the Derajat Column from Jandola to Kaniguram, in the matter of mere distance, would be equivalent to little more than a similar enterprise conducted from the City of London as far as Horsham or East Grinstead, or perhaps from Richmond to Aldershot. In other words, it could not affect more than a trifling part of the whole, although, in the case of a mountainous country like Waziristan, the portion thus devastated might represent its relatively most fertile tracts.

**The need of bringing the Mahsuds to battle.**—For the above and other reasons, such as the need for a rapid decision, there existed an urgent necessity to bring the Mahsuds to battle as soon as possible, and to instil into them a wholesome respect for the Indian Army and for British leadership.

This end would only be attained by the actual defeat of the Mahsuds and by the infliction of severe casualties

in the event of any deliberate opposition offered by them to the invader's advance. Nevertheless, the bringing of an uncivilized enemy to battle and to ultimate defeat in this fashion, is, as a rule, one of the most difficult tasks in the conduct of such operations. In disciplined warfare between equally matched antagonists, the commander of an army would attempt to encompass that end, by either superior mobility and fire effect, or manœuvre or stratagem. For instance, he might offer his antagonist part of his forces in the form of a bait and then strike hard with the remainder, when the hostile troops had been finally committed to action in some manner disadvantageous to themselves. But in country such as Waziristan, and still more against opponents such as the Mahsuds, these methods must always be far more difficult to follow with success. The enemy is nimble and alert, while superiority of weapons is to some extent equalized by the terrain and by difficulties of transport. Victory, with loss to the enemy, can only be obtained by forcing or inducing him to accept battle through the exercise of skilled leadership or of greater mobility, also by defeating him in action with better fire effect and better discipline, and, lastly, by granting him no opportunity to utilize his natural advantages. In the present case, however, the military instrument placed in the hands of the commander of the Waziristan expedition had to prove its temper in actual combat. It is casting no aspersion on newly raised and raw battalions to state that the headquarters of the Waziristan Force could not, as yet, place full confidence in the troops placed at their disposal. The commander of the Force was not free to act as he might have done with skilled battalions. In mountain warfare there is little scope for the exercise of great strategic genius. The scale of the enterprise is smaller, its setting



is far too confined. Tactical skill and insight are paramount. The brunt, therefore, of the task of an invading force falls more heavily on the regimental officers and on the men themselves. Where the latter are highly trained, discipline begins to make itself felt without any regard to the numbers engaged, while the assistance derived from artillery and other such weapons becomes infinitely more effective and is achieved at a lower cost of ammunition. Consequently it becomes possible to meet the enemy on more than level terms, and to bring him to book in the event of his disinclination to fight.

In the present campaign, as soon as the Mahsuds had rejected the Government's terms, as has been already shown, there was only one road open to success, namely, the actual defeat of the tribesmen in action. Owing to the inferior mobility of the troops constituting the Waziristan Force and of the immense volume of transport following the Striking Force, there seemed little hope of the Derajat Column being able to outmanoeuvre the Mahsud, much less to surprise him on the hills. In fact, no attempt was made to do so. The advance of the column was to be preceded by no manœuvre, no attempt at disguising its intentions. It was fortunate that the subsequent very slow, if mechanical, advance should have tempted the Mahsud to attack, and that, when he attacked, he should have adopted tactics that made him a particularly vulnerable target to artillery fire and to the action of aircraft.\*

\* The Official Account of the Waziristan operations, and other official documents open to the student, all betray the latent suggestion that considerable relief was experienced at the fortunate outcome of the opening stages of the campaign against such formidable opposition. In view of the full realisation, at headquarters of the Force at any rate, of the weakness of the troops, combined with the desire reiterated in high quarters to deal with the Wana Wazirs before the summer, the situation is perhaps best summed up in the words of the Official Account at the close of the first paragraph on page 92, where it is stated, "it was

hoped . . . that the concentration of our Striking Force at Jandola, following on intensive air operations, would cause the Mahsuds to accept our terms and so make an advance into the heart of their country unnecessary."

The remaining comments touching the objective of the expedition are not so convincing. At the head of page 93, in an elaborate justification of the adoption of a single line of operations, it is said, ". . . a single line of advance by encouraging a vast display of tribal force and inducing a sense of security from other points enables (*sic*) our forces to bring the tribesmen to battle and to inflict casualties which in every action of importance were considerably heavier than our own." Does not this sentence savour of wisdom "after the event"? Again, on page 100 it is stated, "There seems no doubt that, up to the actual moment of an advance, the Mahsuds expected us to advance by the Shahur not by the Tank Zam. . . . This discovery of their mistake probably accounted for the slight resistance which they put up." The paragraph quoted from this page 100 does not, somehow, seem to harmonize altogether with the third paragraph on page 99, and perhaps not altogether with facts. If it had been desired to leave the tribesmen no doubt as to which line to defend (see top of page 93), why, may it be asked, was not the intention of moving by the Tank Zam conveyed to them either by preliminary troops movements or by intelligence methods? The experience of General Beynon in May, 1917, on that same ground when the Mahsuds actually did make the converse mistake, must have been familiar. That, however, is a detail. The Striking Force moved up the Tank Zam Valley in a straightforward fashion, and was attacked at the moment that it advanced from Jandola. There was no trace of manœuvre or of stratagem to bring the enemy to fight; there seems to have existed neither the scope nor the need for such. The main fact remains that the ferocity of the resistance subsequently offered by the Mahsuds does not seem to have been altogether foreseen, much less invited.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ADVANCE UP THE TANK ZAM VALLEY— THE OPENING PHASE

**The adoption of a system of permanent piquets.**—As soon as the preparations for the advance up the Tank Zam Valley permitted, that is, on 11th December, or two days before the concentration of the Striking Force at Jandola had been terminated, work on the valley road began and the first piquets were posted for its protection. Two battalions supported by two guns moved out and occupied the village of Spinkai Raghza,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles beyond Jandola. The Mahsuds soon made known their intentions, as they fiercely attacked any small party of troops in the act of crossing a difficult gully. For three days this bickering continued, the column suffering some 50 casualties. It was a presage of much to follow.

The method and thoroughness that was subsequently to be observed throughout the advance was at once exhibited in this preliminary work. It was proof of the conviction that the Mahsud was a well-armed enemy, dangerous to inexperienced troops and convoys on the march, with whom liberties might not be taken. To protect the valley road it was, therefore, proposed to have recourse to the system of "permanent piquets" in preference to the employment of piquets temporarily posted day by day as the Striking Force should advance, and to a system of escorts for the protection of subsequent supply columns. These permanent piquets were now to be placed at

moderately close intervals on all commanding points on either side of the road, so that the Striking Force and, in their turn, all convoys should be able to move along the valley, unattended by any large escort, as it were up a corridor, held by garrisoned posts on either flank. All these posts were to be strongly fortified, surrounded with strong barbed wire entanglements, designed for all-round defence, strongly traversed and supplied with a store of hand grenades or Lewis guns. The main object observed in their construction was the greatest degree of protection obtainable for the valley road at the cost of the smallest number of troops. In view of the weaknesses soon to be displayed by the troops of the Striking Force, these piquets assumed considerable importance. The careful siting and construction of the posts which they were to hold became an essential prelude to any advance of the column. So it came about that the construction of many of these posts led to some of the most serious fighting in which the Striking Force became involved during the course of the campaign. More than an entire brigade was sometimes required to drive the Mahsuds off the proposed site of a post, and then to cover the work necessary for its construction.\* If it be remembered that the work of construction alone might be spread over some days and that the brigade engaged on this task would be compelled to return to camp down in the valley each night, the magnitude of this daily task, so often repeated during the next few weeks, will be more readily understood.

**The first Mahsud attack, 17th December.**—At length the Headquarters of the Derajat Column with the 67th Brigade

\* This forms a strong argument in favour of careful preliminary aerial photography (both oblique and stereo-oblique) of the proposed sites of such posts.

and other troops set out from Kirghi and reached Jandola on 17th December. There was no fighting, seven permanent piquets effectually covering the valley road. Work was still proceeding on the camp protection posts on the left bank of the Tank Zam above Jandola during that afternoon, when a deputation of Mahsud *maliks*, professing the willingness of the tribe to comply with the Government's demands, arrived in camp and desired an interview with Major-General Skeen. The object of the *maliks*, however, was too transparent; it was nothing more than to secure immunity for such of their own property as lay within reach of the Striking Force. At the same time the *maliks* undoubtedly hoped to increase their own personal prestige at home in case of success of these overtures. A number of Mahsuds were, at the same moment, observed moving eastwards along the Sarkai Ridge and Spinkai Raghza. At 15.30 hrs., whilst the *maliks* were still in camp, a fierce attack was made on the party covering the construction of the posts. The troops were forced back and the easternmost piquet was, in fact, overrun. In the face of rifle, Lewis gun and mountain gun fire, the Mahsuds rushed in to close quarters with the utmost recklessness. But, after losing some twenty men and inflicting nearly twice that number of casualties, they were forced to give ground. This attack, thoroughly reminiscent of a somewhat similar Mahsud night attack carried out at Wana in November, 1894, and of that treacherous surprise practised by the Tochi Wazirs at Maizar in 1897, proved how this dangerous method of attack required to be taken into far greater account; it also emphasized the prevalent lack of experience of the troops in this class of warfare. Had sufficient aircraft been available to maintain a continuous camp patrol, the incident might even have been avoided.

On the same night it was ascertained that a Mahsud *lashkar* had assembled two miles further up the Tank Zam, while Wana Wazirs were coming down the Shahur Valley. The numbers of these tribesmen were estimated at 2000 and 1000 respectively. Dotak, at the point of junction of the two rivers, seemed to be their probable point of concentration. It is not clear, however, that the Mahsuds had gained certain knowledge as to which valley had been selected as the route of the Striking Force, while the Wazirs were more interested in blocking the approach into their own country. However, the enemy subsequently failed to concentrate at Dotak. Having decided to cross the Spinkai Raghza, General Skeen, on 18th December, ordered the main column to advance at 08.00 hrs., whilst the 68th Brigade (less 1½ battalions) with two guns was to occupy Dotak in case of an attack being made on the transport of the Striking Force from that flank in rear of the advancing troops. The main column consisted of :—

Headquarters and some cavalry.  
 No. 6 and 27 Mountain Batteries.  
 55th Coy. Sappers and Miners.  
 67th Infantry Brigade.  
 2/19th Punjabis.  
 3/34th Sikh Pioneers and details.

**The march to Palosina.**—General Skeen's first step was to clear the Sarkai Ridge. Three battalions moved out in front line to carry out this task. On the right the 1/103rd Mahratta L.I. cleared the north-eastern portion of the ridge and adjacent broken ground, seven low-flying aeroplanes assisting the operation. Further round to the west the 2/112th Infantry and 1/55th Rifles, after securing the crest, continued and reached the steep ridge to the east of Spinkai Ghash. By 13.30 hrs. it was taken, British



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE OPERATIONS IN THE VICINITY  
OF MANDANNA KACH.

casualties amounting to 78. The Mahsuds did not offer any serious resistance, retiring up the valley with the aeroplanes flying in pursuit. But the tribesmen proved difficult to observe, and when they dispersed they could not be followed up. At 16.30 hrs. the transport, consisting of 2700 camels and 2300 mules, arrived in camp. So far the enemy's resistance had been less serious than had been anticipated. The column then settled down on the Palosina Plateau, where it was to remain ten days, that is, until the morning of 29th December.

**The ground adjoining Palosina.**—The ground in the immediate vicinity of the camp was to be the scene of a series of serious engagements all of which arose out of the operations connected with the construction of the defensive posts. On the 19th a post was completed on the Sarkai Ridge, after which task two battalions, 1/103rd Mahratta L.I. and 1/55th Rifles, of the 67th Brigade crossed the Tank Zam for the purpose of establishing a similar post on Mandanna Hill. The ensuing operations are illustrated by the attached diagram. Opposite Palosina Camp the right bank of the Tank Zam rises in a very steep, craggy, slope some 200 feet high. At the summit lies a long plateau 300 yards wide, sloping northwards from the river-bed level upwards and towards the dominant feature of Mandanna Hill. Parallel to the Tank Zam and west of the plateau runs a steep ravine which originates in a tangle of rock, known as "Broken Hill," situated below the summit of Mandanna Hill, thence running some 2000 yards southwards into the Tank Zam Valley. On the far side of the ravine rises a broken, rocky spur running southwards and downwards from Mandanna Hill itself. From the summit of the Hill the following salient features occur in this ridge; first comes "Broken Hill," then south of the latter rise



the "Comb Rocks." Below, and to the east of this feature again, are found the "Broken Boulders," whilst between "Broken Hill" and the next lower feature, "Sandbag Hill," lies a flat piece of ground dominated by the 150-foot cliffs of "Sandbag Hill"; below the latter in turn come the "White Breasts," which then stand higher than "Black Breasts," the last and lowest feature of the ridge. This whole ridge, together with the long plateau described above, thus form an elongated horseshoe, the ravine skirting the inside of its eastern arm. Between the ravine and the ridge to the west lies a rugged slope of 400 to 700 yards width, at the upper end of which rise the "Red Rocks," while at the lower end stands "Black and White Hill." North of "Broken Hill" the ridge drops sharply into a hollow, known as "Pink Bowl."

**The first attempt to capture Mandanna Hill fails.**—The 1/103rd Mahrattas and 1/55th Rifles now set out to capture and to hold Mandanna Hill, supported by the fire of the gun and howitzer batteries in action by the Tank Zam. The fire of the latter cleared the ravine of Mahsuds while the Mahrattas occupied "Red Rocks" and "Sandbag Hill" without any difficulty. A company of the 55th occupied "Broken Boulders" and the lower slopes of "Sandbag Hill." The remainder of the 55th were in support on the left of the 103rd. Aeroplanes had carried out a reconnaissance which, unfortunately, proved unsuccessful, while the ground reconnaissance carried out by the troops had been inadequate. No real indication had so far been obtained to show that "Comb Rocks" were strongly held by Mahsuds. The next step was to seize that feature. Suddenly it was discovered that the ground rendered such an operation truly difficult. As the Mahrattas attempted to carry out their orders, they were met by a heavy converging rifle fire from the "Comb Rocks." The guns and

howitzers continued firing at "Comb Rocks" for another hour. This support assisted the Mahrattas to make several attempts to reach the rocks, but all failed and heavy casualties resulted. The Mahsuds now counter-attacked. Under well-directed covering fire they made their way up "Sandbag Hill," whence the Mahrattas were dislodged and forced back in disorder by the fire of the victorious Mahsuds now on the summit. Having no supports left, the flanking companies of the 103rd found themselves exposed to enfilade fire and began to give ground. Some of the Mahrattas broke through a company of the 55th, which thereupon began to lose heart. A general retreat set in. "Red Rocks" were lost. Pressing forward with great determination the Mahsuds, estimated at 900 riflemen, gradually drove back the wavering troops and very soon a total evacuation of the right bank of the Tank Zam took place. The British casualties amounted to some 250, whilst 130 rifles and 10 Lewis guns were lost. The fall of their commanding officer early in the day, followed by that of 4 other British officers, had left the 103rd virtually helpless. Moreover, the behaviour of the men also showed that they had lost all confidence in themselves and all control of their weapons. From the purely tactical standpoint the incident may be regarded as illustrating the importance of maintaining a sufficiency of troops in reserve. The Mahrattas had kept no reserve, and their small supports were inadequate to control the retreat. But other and graver causes contributed to the failure. In the first place, for some unexplained reason there had been no aerial co-operation worthy of mention. One single aeroplane of 20th Squadron made two flights. Had the operation been carried out with the same number of troops and with the same aerial support as on the following day, the operation might surely have ended success

fully. Secondly, this detachment, two battalions strong, had been placed under the orders of the senior battalion commander without his receiving sufficient staff or means of communication to carry out a difficult task. Lastly, this officer selected a most inopportune moment for summoning his British officers to his side for an exposition of his plan of action. They came running down the slope towards him; the inexperienced rank and file imagined that they were being deserted and gave way to panic.

**The second attempt succeeds.**—It was now necessary to retrieve the situation and to eradicate the impression left by the day's reverse. On 20th December, therefore, Brigadier-General Lucas in person led four battalions :—

2/19th Punjabis,  
1/55th Rifles,  
109th Infantry,  
2/112th Infantry,

together with some pioneers and sappers and miners over the same ground to carry out the same task. The 103rd Mahrattas were too much shaken to be employed, but the 1/55th were fit to be given another trial. In addition, the entire resources of the R.A.F. were called into play; 4 machines from 20th Squadron, 6 from 99th and 3 from 97th were allotted to bombing and machine-gun work in support of the troops, and carried out twenty-seven flights over Mandanna Hill during the whole operation, that is, until 17.00 hrs. Six more machines flew up the valley bombing all parties of the enemy in sight. The two batteries again came into action along the river-bed.

This time all went well with the attack. By 10.00 hrs. "Black and White Hill" and the "Red Rocks" were taken. Soon after, 1/55th Rifles were on the eastern end

of "Comb Rocks" and nearing "Broken Hill," having suffered less than 20 casualties. By the afternoon, work was in progress on the site of the fortified post on the summit of Mandanna Hill. This satisfactory result may be ascribed; first, to the employment of a sufficient volume of force to compensate for the lack of training of the troops; secondly, to adequate reconnaissance and support by aeroplanes; thirdly, to the support of the artillery. The accurate bombing and machine gunning of the reverse slopes of "Comb Rocks" by one or two airmen in particular proved highly effective.

**The loss of the piquet on Mandanna Hill.**—As many Mahsuds were seen retiring up the Tank Zam and others, approaching from Kotkai, were observed to be turning back at the sight of the shells and bombs bursting round Mandanna Hill, it appeared safe for the troops to entrust the fortified piquet, though scarcely complete, to the hands of one British officer and 100 men of 2/19th Punjabis. They were left in the unfinished work. Towards evening the piquet reported to Palosina by telephone that some Mahsuds were assembling to the north and west of the summit, whilst from camp a party of the enemy was observed running across the Tank Zam from Spinkai Ghash to the foot of Mandanna Hill. At that moment the telephone gave out, and nothing more was heard from the piquet until its survivors came running into camp hotly pursued by Mahsuds. The British officer in command had been killed and the piquet, utterly demoralized, had fled. The course of events appeared to be as follows. The party of Mahsuds, not more than 50 strong, hoping probably to achieve only some minor success or intent on sniping, had come upon the majority of the little garrison while busy moving their stores and water into the post where they had laid down their rifles and equipment.

The garrison was thus caught defenceless. The Mahsuds thereupon opened fire from "Broken Hill" and "Comb Rocks" on the working party. Unable to reply the latter took shelter in the rocks. Meanwhile, two small parties of Mahsuds attacked the post itself, which was still incomplete and lacked traverses. Caught at such disadvantage there was little hope for the garrison. Headed by their British officer, a few men attempted a desperate effort to drive off the Mahsuds with the bayonet; this entire party, however, was shot down. Thereupon the survivors fled for Palosina Camp, hotly pursued by Mahsuds who even attempted to wrench rifles out of the fugitives' hands as they ran.

**The action on Tarakai Hill.**—After this episode it appeared even more necessary to restore the shaken confidence of the troops by some fresh operation. It was, therefore, decided to establish another permanent piquet on the ridge dominating the camp to the north at a distance of about one mile. This was called Tarakai, or "Black Hill," an outcrop in the tumbled ridges running south-west from the culminating point of Sagarzai. On this difficult ridge about 120 yards to the north of the proposed site of the post stood a low ridge commanding most of the ground by which the post was approached from that side. The ground offered very good cover nearly everywhere, but the critical point on the ridge lay at 2000 yards range from the river and offered a good artillery target.

On 21st December the 82nd Punjabis and 109th Infantry set out to capture the hill. Aerial assistance was forthcoming. Seven machines from 20th Squadron, 4 from 99th and 2 from 97th made a total of eighteen flights in support of the infantry during the day. Little difficulty was experienced in the occupation of Tarakai and of the adjacent ground. The troops advanced rapidly

and had completed their task by 10.30 hrs. Construction of the post was put in hand and the wire entanglement was almost complete when Mahsuds were observed crossing the Tank Zam from the direction of "Pink Bowl." Others were seen later, assembling midway between Tarakai and Sagarzai Peak. The former party collected at Ibrahim Gul and soon after began attacking Tarakai. By 13.30 hrs. sniping at shortening ranges increased. This desultory fire was next followed by a sudden converging rush of Mahsuds from three directions. The troops covering the working parties on the right gave ground. Enfiladed from that side, the centre followed; this in turn led to a retreat on the left. Fortunately the officer commanding 3/34th Sikh Pioneers manned the half-finished post and effectually beat back four consecutive attacks of Mahsuds. Yet a fifth attack was impending when the Pioneers found themselves running out of ammunition and grenades, having expended all their supply in stemming the earlier attacks. In good order the garrison of the post withdrew towards camp. The Mahsuds on the ridge, about 800 strong, now offered a rare artillery target. Guns and howitzers from the river-bed were turned on to them and succeeded in inflicting severe casualties. The covering troops rallied. Reinforced, they were able to attempt a counter-attack, but failed or lacked the spirit to recover the post in the face of accurate fire from the well-concealed Mahsuds. It was then beginning to grow dark, and the troops were withdrawn to camp.

**The resistance of 3/34th Sikh Pioneers.**—The resistance offered by the detachment of 3/34th Pioneers was worthy of all praise and reminiscent of the best traditions of the Indian Army. The same praise might be bestowed upon the stretcher-bearers of the medical units in their attempts to bring in many wounded men. But the conduct of the

covering infantry can only be regarded as indifferent and due to very inadequate training, especially with regard to the use of the rifle. The men individually and collectively failed to take up positions whence they could see or shoot with good effect. Their shelters were badly sited and constructed: they were not even bullet proof. But the inability of these troops to recapture Tarakai when reinforced and supported by accurate artillery fire was more than regrettable; it had left the honours of the day with the Mahsuds, when their defeat might have considerably shortened the campaign. On the other hand, the enemy's casualties, chiefly due to gun fire, were high and credibly reported at a later date to have exceeded 200 killed and 300 severely wounded. The British loss amounted to 66 killed or missing, 256 wounded.

**Comments on this action.**—The situation of the Striking Force was none too favourable. Not less than five of its battalions had very clearly shown symptoms of weakness that rendered their further utilization somewhat hazardous. The impression of their retreat had permeated the Force and even the Indian artillerymen seemed shaken by the events of these three days. It appeared difficult in some ways to account for the failure. The troops were admittedly very "green" and inadequately trained even for warfare in the plains, much less for frontier fighting. Yet troops of little better quality had, even in pre-War days, been known to go through a campaign without disaster. In the present case, moreover, the weaknesses disclosed had seemed to affect the entire Force, which now betrayed many symptoms of liability to panic. Remedial measures were urgent, and there was no time to allow for possible improvement in the weaker units. Two additional battalions of Gurkhas were consequently asked for from India, and the following changes were made within the

Force. The 82nd Punjabis, 2/112th Infantry and 2/19th Punjabis were relegated to Lines of Communication and replaced in the Striking Force by the 4/39th Garhwal Rifles, 2/76th Punjabis and 2/152nd Punjabis from the 43rd Brigade; the 2/112th Infantry were also shortly relieved by the 2/150th. In addition, a fresh reserve of ammunition was demanded from India. The Lewis guns were removed from the companies and grouped into battalion or brigade reserve under a British officer, as the troops were not to be trusted with these weapons. The marksmanship had been bad, the tactical handling faulty, while erratic distribution of fire and waste of ammunition rendered them a positive danger. Lastly, cables were despatched from Simla to recall from Egypt and elsewhere, for service in Waziristan, officers of the Indian Army possessing five years' service, irrespective of their experience in frontier warfare. The employment of lethal gas was even suggested, but it was not forthcoming. In short, deficiencies of *moral* and of training were to be made good by the employment of numbers, by a greater expenditure of ammunition, by fortification, by deliberate movements, and last but not least, by the generous co-operation of aircraft. Owing to this last circumstance no advance was to be undertaken except in possible flying weather.

**Tarakai taken.**—Meanwhile, it was urgent to give the enemy no respite, and on 22nd December all available troops were called upon to retrieve the failure of the previous day. In spite of not altogether favourable weather the airmen were required to do their utmost; 8 machines, the smaller Bristol fighters, of 20th Squadron, 4 from Bannu and 4 from Tank succeeded in carrying out thirteen flights. In view of the weather more could not be expected. Fortunately, the Mahsuds had, on the previous day, suffered casualties hitherto unknown to them, and were



so fully occupied in removing their dead and wounded that the occupation of Tarakai presented few difficulties. The inability of the Mahsuds to exploit their success, even on the previous day, was shown by the recovery on Tarakai of many rifles, 2 Lewis guns, much ammunition and even officers' binoculars. It was not their custom to overlook such precious loot. By nightfall the fortified post, christened "Pioneer" Piquet as a tribute to the gallantry of the Sikhs on the previous day, had been fully completed.

On the two following days, 23rd and 24th, it rained, and conditions were so unfavourable to aircraft that General Skeen decided to attempt no further movement. Meanwhile, the Mahsud *maliks* notified their desire to attend a *jirga* at Jandola with a view to effecting a settlement. It seemed doubtful, however, whether these professions could be regarded as sufficiently genuine to be accepted at their face value. The tribal *lashkars* had been out for nearly a fortnight; they had suffered somewhat heavily and were evidently anxious to return home to replenish their supplies. There appeared to be more than a probability that the *maliks* wished to retrieve their shaken prestige among their own people, and perhaps hoped to gain time, at least, for preparing further resistance to our advance at a point further up the valley.

**Mandanna Hill occupied on 25th.**—On the 25th work on the defensive post was again taken in hand on Mandanna Hill. The covering troops were unopposed, but the Mahsuds could be seen on the slopes of Tsappar Ghar, the high peak some 3 miles north-west of Mandanna Hill, also at Kotkai, a few miles up the Tank Zam Valley. As the weather favoured flying, all available aeroplanes were sent out from the 20th Squadron. Four machines from Bannu and 3 from Tank accomplished two flights each, while

3 machines from 90th and 94th Squadrons respectively assisted. In all twenty-five flights were made, chiefly directed at immobilizing the various gatherings of Mahsuds in the vicinity of Mandanna Hill, while the troops were engaged in covering the construction of the post on its summit. In this they were entirely successful. The post was satisfactorily completed, although it was not garrisoned until the following day. This terminated the fighting round Palosina.

On the 27th there was no movement.

**Jirga held at Jandola on 28th.**—On 28th Mahsud *maliks*, coming from nearly every tribal section of importance, excepting the Abdullai of Makin, although it had been notified to them that the British advance would not be checked in view of any possible meeting, arrived to attend the *jirga* to be held at Jandola next morning. Major-General Climo was present to meet the *maliks*. In view of the fierce opposition that had recently been offered to the advance, the terms originally offered to the Mahsuds in early November were stiffened. An additional hundred rifles, to be permanently confiscated, were demanded. The *maliks* were also informed that the further advance of the column would continue without interruption until such time as by the payment of their fines and by the surrender of the stipulated rifles they had proved the sincerity of their submission. These terms were accepted by the Mahsuds and signed and sealed by those present.

**The end of the fighting round Palosina.**—Thus closed the first stage of the campaign. It is true that the Waziristan Force had advanced less than 4 miles in ten days, and that the Mahsuds had not yet been defeated in open fight. None the less, in view of the general condition and value of the troops composing the Striking Force, no very rapid progress could be expected after the Mahsud

resistance had proved to be so formidable. The difficulties and checks encountered by the expedition at the very start only showed that the apprehension felt as to the inexperience and lack of individual training of the newly raised battalions was not without due foundation. The reality, in fact, betrayed a far graver state of affairs than had ever been anticipated. On the other hand, the co-operation of the aerial units had been of real value. But for this support from the air, both in reconnaissance and in action, the Waziristan Force might have fared worse than it did. The help that was also forthcoming from the mountain batteries, both from the older guns and from the new 3·7-inch howitzer, had been of great assistance. To the artillery may be ascribed the very heavy loss inflicted on the Mahsuds attacking "Black Hill" on 21st. It is not improbable that the enemy's *lashkars* on the ridge may have suffered casualties to the extent of 50 per cent of their strength. The lesson inflicted on them on that occasion was never forgotten.

**Its results.**—Nevertheless, the most disquieting feature in the situation lay in the disparity now revealed between the fighting value of the Mahsud and that of the infantry of the Indian Army. It foreboded no easy task further ahead. In both engagements on Mandanna Hill the Mahsuds had shown considerable skill in use of ground, while their rifle fire had been admirably applied. On Tarakai, again, their employment of fire action was even better; from positions swept by our artillery fire and at ranges up to 1500 yards, the accuracy and volume of their fire had proved surprising. Moreover, they had succeeded in combining fire and shock action in most effective fashion, since their rifle fire was so well directed that the swordsmen were able to climb up the rocky slopes unseen to the last minute. Much of this newly found skill may be attributed to the presence

in their ranks of ex-officers and many hundreds of ex-privates of the Waziristan Militia and of the regular Indian infantry. But the very large amount of small arm ammunition which the Mahsuds possessed at this time should also be held responsible for their fire tactics. Their supply of ammunition far exceeded that which had ever been known to be in the hands of frontier tribes in the past. Their covering fire was lavish and well sustained, while they used *uphill* fire to an extent hitherto unfamiliar in mountain warfare. The supremacy of the regular troops was in the end to reassert itself. In the meantime, the complete absence of even partial superiority over the enemy threatened to jeopardize the whole plan of campaign. From a political point of view the failure of the troops round Palosina was equally regrettable, since a rapid and overwhelming success of the Striking Force might possibly have exercised a decisive influence on the Mahsuds. It is said that it was only on 14th December that the final determination to oppose the advance of the Waziristan Force had been adopted, and, even five days later, it was reported that there still existed a lack of unanimity amongst them as to the advisability of rejecting the Government's terms. If, at this period, there had been in existence any strong current of opinion towards a pacific settlement, the events of these last ten days were to dispel all probability of the "peace party" gaining the upper hand among the Mahsuds.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PASSAGE OF THE AHNAI TANGI—THE SECOND STAGE OF THE ADVANCE

**The move to Kotkai.**—All preparations were now complete for a forward movement and in accordance with the statement made to the Mahsud *maliks* during General Climo's *jirga*, held at Jandola on 29th December, the advance of the column was continued from Palosina on the same morning. Column Headquarters and the 43rd Brigade with attached troops marched a distance of about 4 miles as far as Kotkai, where the Striking Force was to remain encamped in the open valley until 7th January. Some of the road was already protected by the permanent piquets posted in advance on either side of the valley. The advance did not provoke any real fighting, some 500 Mahsuds, believed to be under the personal direction of Mulla Fazl Din, offering only a feeble resistance. Some 5 heavy bombing aeroplanes from Mianwali accompanied the troops, but the Bristol fighters of the 20th Squadron were, for some reason, not called upon to assist. The remainder of the column, the 67th Brigade included, remained at Palosina in order to allow supplies to be collected more rapidly at Kotkai. In mountain warfare it is always necessary to initiate any advance to a further halting-place with as few troops as possible, so as to allow of a more rapid concentration of stores at the end of the next forward stage. Consequently, in the case of the move to Kotkai, the 67th Brigade did not leave Palosina for

that place before the 6th January, that is, when the transport columns had been able to convey a sufficient reserve of stores to Kotkai. Had the entire combatant strength of the column moved forward together, the eventual rate of advance would have been less, rather than more, rapid, since the maximum amount of stores that could be moved forward daily would have provided only one day's food for the larger number of troops and the numerous transport animals required for them. This process of bringing up stores and supplies always governs the rate of advance of an invading column in mountain warfare. In the case of the present expedition it may be asserted that, in view of the amount of ammunition, together with the mass of defence stores and winter scale equipment, which were clearly required, the transport problem was not likely to be easier than in any previous campaign of a like nature: far from it. The forward movement of the column, owing to the lack of experience of its constituent troops, already demanded that the advance should be carried out in deliberate fashion and with every precaution.

**The posting of permanent piquets.**—During the sojourn of the column at Kotkai, the posting and strengthening of permanent piquets remained the principal task of the Striking Force. The road from Jandola to Kotkai was first completely secured. Further posts were then constructed northwards along the Tank Zam Valley preparatory to the next step forward. These measures were successful and encountered little opposition from the Mahsuds, except in the case of the posting of a piquet at a point named "Scrub Hill." This incident demands a brief description, as it illustrates both the fierceness which the tribesmen were displaying in the attack, as well as the apparent inability of inexperienced regimental officers to

calculate the importance of the element of time in mountain warfare. The task of posting piquets in mountain warfare requires not only careful preliminary arrangements, but also a considerable rapidity of movement, the adoption—as far as possible—of every method whereby some degree of surprise may be assured and, lastly, an accurate timing of the work in hand. These matters were as yet insufficiently appreciated at that date by the younger officers and N.C.O.'s of the force. So it happened on 2nd January. The 4/39th Garhwal Rifles, ordered to cover the construction of the piquet on "Scrub Hill," reached their allotted positions on Spin Ghara Ridge without difficulty. Then between 11.00 hrs. and 15.00 hrs., after much sniping, a Mahsud *lashkar* attacked the right company of the Garhwalis with great determination on three occasions. Each time the tribesmen came within stone-throwing distance, and were only driven off after stiff fighting. Removal of the wounded caused the Garhwalis some delay. During this time a party of Mahsuds, under heavy covering fire, succeeded in lodging themselves in rear of the flank of the retiring troops. Unsuccessful attempts were made by the latter to drive back the enemy with grenades and stones. Not until a party of 10 men, under Lieutenant Kenny (who received a posthumous Victoria Cross), had gallantly sacrificed themselves to a man in a desperate charge with the object of facilitating the withdrawal, did the Garhwalis manage to withdraw down the hill. The British casualties were not far short of 120; the Mahsuds lost about 80. Insignificant though it may seem, this little action came as a welcome sign of better things to come. The Garhwalis had shown fine determination and true fighting spirit in the encounter, which was an infantry engagement pure and simple, since aerial and artillery support did not form the

basis of the operation. The example was to prove of real value.

Three days later, on the 5th, the 43rd Brigade moved out to cover the reconstruction of the post on "Scrub Hill," and also of a similar post situated one mile further upstream, called "Whitechapel." Both these works, having been left unoccupied and, in the case of the latter, unfinished, were found to have been demolished by the Mahsuds. On this occasion the posts were completed and manned, although as the Mahsuds were expecting the return of the troops at those points, the operation involved some fighting and 50 casualties. Nevertheless, throughout these days the activity of the Mahsuds was never very pronounced; besides the attack made by the enemy on the 5th, little else took place. The Striking Force was thus granted an opportunity of recovering from the tribulations it had suffered during the fighting at Palosina, and the new units were able to shake down into their places.

**The difficulty of forcing the Ahnai Tangi.**—Since the 67th Brigade would reach Kotkai Camp on the 6th, it was decided to advance on the following day in order to seize the Ahnai Tangi, a difficult gorge through which flows the Tank Zam River, situated 4 miles upstream from Kotkai. Although the actual defile is but 80 yards in length, its sides are formed of precipitous cliffs some 150 feet high, while its width is but 30 yards. The ground on the downstream side of the gorge is, in addition, entirely commanded from both sides by high, craggy, hills. To the south and south-west, on the right bank of the Tank Zam, all approaches to the Tangi lead past the Spin Ghara Ridge, which rises to a height of 700 feet above the valley floor. Between the steep slope of that ridge and the Tank Zam lies a little plateau cut by numerous deep ravines that can only be crossed by troops when moving



in single file and at very few places.\* On the left bank of the Tank Zam a steep, craggy *massif*, known as the Konr, rises to 1200 feet above the river level. The position is thus in every respect one of great natural strength against an advance from the south. There was, moreover, every reason to expect that the Mahsuds would offer a stubborn resistance at this point, for it had been credibly reported that a fresh and large *lashkar* was assembling, while Wana Wazirs were also rumoured to be moving towards the Tangi. In addition, it was believed that two more tribal sections inhabiting the district adjacent to the gorge, the Jalal Khel and Haibat Khel, intended to assist the defenders of the Tangi from the neighbouring valley of the Shuza. It was subsequently asserted that the tribesmen had surmised that the latter valley was to be devastated; this fact, it is alleged, both stiffened their resistance at this point and conduced to their massing on the east bank of the Tank Zam. (See diagram on page 124.)

**The first attempt on 7th January.**—On 7th January the troops moved out from camp to the attack. The main effort was to take place on the west bank of the Tank Zam, the right flank of the attacking troops being covered by a parallel movement on the east bank of the river. In accordance with this plan the 43rd Brigade advanced up the latter, the left bank, their movement covering the advance of the 67th Brigade on the opposite, the right bank. By 11.00 hrs. the 43rd Brigade was ready to attack, but the Mahsuds had, by this time, concentrated in great numbers on the slopes of Konr where the conformation of the ground favoured their sniping ability, whilst they retained a clear line of retreat either up the Tank Zam or into the Shuza Valleys. It now gradually became evident that the first step, if the attack was to be successful, must consist in the occupation of the slopes of

Konr. But it was also becoming obvious that it was then too late in the day to carry out this manoeuvre, and that there would not remain sufficient daylight available for both the capture of the Tangi and the subsequent formation of a camp further up the valley. The troops were consequently ordered to return to Kotkai. The 109th alone were molested by the Mahsuds in the withdrawal. A party of the enemy exposed itself in attempting to cut off a rearguard and was severely handled, losing 30 killed. Otherwise there was virtually no fighting. On the next day, 8th, in order to give the troops every chance after a heavy day's marching and before a renewed effort, the Striking Force was given a rest. The Mahsuds, in the meanwhile, were massing in still greater force round the Tangi. The *lashkar* at the defile now numbered between 3000 and 3500.

**The second attempt on 9th January.**—Although it was clear that the Mahsud concentration on Konr, that is, on the east bank of the river, would render it desirable to launch the main attack on that side, it was even more certain that the very broken and steep nature of the ground might jeopardize the success of any such attempt, even if it did not render it virtually impracticable. So the original plan of launching the main attack on the western bank was retained, but two preliminary steps were decided upon :—

- (i) The 67th Brigade was ordered to encamp well to the north of Kotkai in order to reduce the distance to be covered before the attack.
- (ii) A strong point was to be constructed to the east of the river and south-east of Zeriwam in order to cover the right flank of the attacking troops.

Accordingly, on 9th at 08.00 hrs., the 67th Brigade with

3/34th Pioneers left Kotkai and formed another camp 2 miles further upstream, while the 43rd Brigade set about constructing a strong point south-east of Zeriwam. The latter work proceeded rapidly. At 11.00 hrs., however, enemy rifle fire became very heavy; the extreme right of the covering troops on the Konr slopes was heavily attacked and driven in with loss, so that it was necessary to reinforce the 67th Brigade from down the valley. The situation now appeared unsatisfactory, and since the defences of the fortified post were far from complete, at 15.00 hrs. the 43rd Brigade was ordered to withdraw, again owing to the insufficiency of the remaining daylight to carry out its task. The enemy on rushing into the unfinished work were heavily shelled. Another party of Mahsuds 200 strong attacked the 4/39th Garhwal Rifles on the Kafir Luta ridge, 1 mile south of Konr, but the Garhwalis, supported by the 27th Mountain Battery, inflicted heavy loss on their assailants. All the troops then withdrew to camp without further incident.

**Fresh attempt on 10th.**—On the 10th another attempt was made to construct the same fortified post, but with little better success. Advancing in force from the Shuza Valley, the Mahsuds attacked the covering troops of the 43rd Brigade on the main ridge, and eventually drove them back by intense and accurate sniping fire. The advanced troops then fell right back on the unfinished post. It was once more found that there would be insufficient daylight to organize and drive home an attack on the ridge. The brigade was then ordered to withdraw and reached camp by 17.00 hrs. The casualties on these two days numbered 170, including several British officers.

This repeated failure to take the Tangi did not improve matters. The troops were not capable of greater exertions, while the tribesmen were now daily gaining fresh confidence

from their successful resistance. Yet, without support from the eastern bank of the Tank Zam, the attack on the Tangi promised to be a hazardous and costly undertaking. The assistance received from the aerial units during these days was also proving disappointing after the earlier and valuable help which the aeroplanes had afforded to the troops round Palosina. This should be ascribed almost solely to a shortage of machines, although the conditions under which flying was possible were on certain days not altogether favourable.

**General Skeen determines upon a night march.**—General Skeen realising, however, that the situation did not brook of further delay, determined to attempt a night march and by this means to surprise the Mahsuds. The decision was a bold one, since it entailed the partial sacrifice of aerial co-operation, while the troops were untrained for such a manœuvre, more especially over such difficult ground as lay before them. But as four days had gone by without obtaining any result, and as the attack on the Tangi promised to be a very difficult operation during the brief hours of daylight, such a decision seemed well advised. It was cold and the Mahsuds were not likely to be sleeping out. The season, too, was kind in that the moon was waning and in the last quarter; climatic and other conditions were thus favourable to the attempt. The plan of operations was the following. The 43rd Brigade was ordered to move out from Kotkai at 05.00 hrs. so as to be in position at dawn, i.e. about 07.15 hrs., and then to attack and to occupy two dominating points of the Konr ridge that overlooked—from a distance it is true—the flank of the high ground on the west bank of the Tangi. Simultaneously the 67th Brigade was to occupy the Spin Ghara ridge and, at the same hour as the attack of the 43rd Brigade, to assault the western heights of the Tangi itself.



**Its success.**—The night march was destined to achieve its purpose. The 67th Brigade moved off at 03.00 hrs. ; by 10.00 hrs. the west bank of the Tangi was captured ; while at 11.15 hrs. the eastern bank had also been secured by the 43rd Brigade. Piquets were now posted to hold the defile. After midday the weather changed ; rain fell and visibility became so poor as to render aerial co-operation impossible. Nevertheless, the troops were able to withdraw without difficulty. The 43rd Brigade returned to Kotkai, whilst the 67th Brigade encamped on the new site west of Zeriwam. This spot became known as Ahnai Camp. The day's fighting resulted in only about 30 casualties, so that the operations might be considered a complete success. All available aeroplanes from the three squadrons made some twenty flights over the Tangi as soon as it was sufficiently light, and contributed thereby to this result. The 12th was spent in road construction, and the 13th saw the final preparations for the advance through the Tangi.

None of the fighting on these three days had been of a very determined character. The Mahsuds, more pre-occupied with the defence of the east bank of the Tangi, with a view to protecting the Shuza Valley from devastation, had left the Wana Wazir *lashkar* to defend the west bank. The latter tribe had not fought with the same spirit as the Mahsuds. This state of affairs promised to widen the breach between the two tribes.

**The defile passed on 14th.**—On the 14th the defile was traversed by the entire Striking Force without further incident, but on the far side it was once more faced with a difficult problem. Above the Tangi a steep ravine, named the Zaghbir Pal, runs nearly parallel to the Tank Zam and joins that river just clear of the entrance to the gorge. A long, steep, spur descending from high ground to the north

separates that ravine from the Tank Zam itself. The culminating feature of the spur is a flat-topped hill about 150 yards long that dominates the whole valley as well as its right bank from a height of 900 feet above the river level. This was christened "Flathead Left." Beyond, and to the north-west of "Flathead Left," but separated from it by another deep gully, is a further well-marked feature of jumbled cliff, known as "Marble Arch." This commands the Tank Zam Valley itself. Further along the same ridge as "Flathead Left," but more to the north-east and separated from "Flathead Left" by a precipitous *nala*, is another higher summit that came to be known as "Flathead Right."

The Striking Force debouched from the Ahnai Tangi prepared for all emergencies and in the following order. A strong advanced guard of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  battalions with two 2.75-inch guns led the way; on the right a special flank guard of 2 companies of 2/5th Gurkhas, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Crowdy, D.S.O., moved from Ahnai Camp at 07.30 hrs. in order to seize "Flathead Left" with the object of establishing a piquet thereon. The main body, commanded by General Skeen and consisting of 1 troop cavalry, 2 guns and 2 howitzers,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  battalions, 1 field company, together with a few special troops, marched along the Tank Zam River. They were followed by a rearguard of 2 companies. Two more battalions with 2 mountain guns and 2 howitzers, commanded by Brigadier-General Lucas, were detailed to escort the transport columns on the march from Ahnai Camp; these latter columns comprised some 1500 mules and 2800 camels.

**The action on "Flathead Left."**—On nearing the cultivated *kach*, near Asa Khan, the advanced guard met with some opposition. Shortly after, it came under

accurate rifle fire from "Marble Arch" and "Flathead Right." In the meantime, the flank guard, on reaching "Flathead Left" at 08.30 hrs., had also encountered opposition coming from "Flathead Right." It was now growing obvious that the latter height would have to be cleared before any further progress could be achieved up the valley, since it commanded both "Flathead Left" and "Marble Arch." Rifle fire from the last-named point was already threatening to hold up the entire advance. Not long after, it became known in the valley that severe fighting was in progress on "Flathead Left," where the Gurkhas, who had been in action since reaching the summit, had begun to run out of ammunition in replying to the heavy Mahsud fire. No means existed for replenishing their supply, and they were making desperate efforts with the bayonet to hold their ground. First one company, then the remainder, of 76th Punjabis was sent from the main body to assist the hard-pressed detachment, whilst a company of 2/9th Gurkhas, despatched by General Lucas, reached the summit from the Ahnai Tangi itself. With these reinforcements "Flathead Left" was eventually cleared of Mahsuds and successfully held. But a further attack directed against "Flathead Right" by the Gurkhas was brought to a halt in face of the very accurate rifle fire of the Mahsuds. Several renewed and gallant attempts to take the summit broke down. It subsequently transpired that large numbers of tribesmen, who had been sheltering in the caves near Sarwekunda and round Shilmanzai Kach, had fully appreciated the tactical importance of "Flathead Left." Surmising that a piquet would be posted on that spot they had intended to dispute the possession of that hill. Hence the severe fighting that ensued. Had it not been for the brilliant bayonet charges carried out by the 2/5th Gurkhas, in which their com-



manding officer was killed, the detachment of that battalion would have been overrun and the hill lost.

**The engagement in the valley.**—Meanwhile, in the valley the advanced guard had also become sharply engaged. A rush of Mahsuds from a concealed *nala* running down from “Marble Arch” where they had escaped detection caused some confusion among the leading troops, but the section of 2·75-inch guns, then marching some 400 yards behind the head of the advanced guard, was able to come into action at a moment’s notice and with considerable effect. The value of the guns, placed as they were in the best position to render speedy help, was very great. Although no further Mahsud attacks took place, the enemy’s position on “Marble Arch” prevented any further advance. It was now 13.30 hrs.; the transport had closed up on the troops and was clear of the Tangi. It was, consequently, too late to think of a withdrawal to Ahnai Camp. The only course, as it appeared to General Skeen, was to encamp for the night where the troops stood. Indeed, there was no alternative.\* So camp was pitched on a site that subsequently became known as “Asa Khan Camp.” The locality was, in truth, cramped and in every respect thoroughly unfavourable for such a purpose. It lay in the bed of the Tank Zam River, surrounded on every side by high ground, the loss of which might have entailed serious consequences. But there is no doubt that the confidence of the leaders in their troops was now growing, and the risks that were being accepted proved well worth the advantage gained.

**The Force encamps at Asa Khan.**—In view of the decision to encamp, steps were taken during the late afternoon to

\* This is the view put forward in the Commander-in-Chief’s despatch. The Official Account makes the best of the situation and claims this to be a voluntary decision on the part of the G.O.C.

secure "Dazzle Hill," an important feature situated 1 mile west, the proposed site for the camp. As this feature commanded a ravine where Mahsuds were reported to be assembling, 2 companies of 109th Infantry, being the only troops then available for the task, were sent out to occupy the summit. The 2 companies made headway up the slope and were finally able to hold on to some ground which they had gained, though only at the cost of heavy loss. Nevertheless, they were numerically too weak to carry the hill. However, by dint of these efforts the camp was rendered safe on the west side. But on the east, on "Flathead Left," which entirely commanded the Asa Khan Camp, a critical situation had again arisen. The Mahsuds renewed their efforts and again made four determined attempts to dislodge the garrison. The fighting was very severe, bayonets, bombs, knives and even stones were employed at close quarters. Fortunately another 2 companies of 2/9th Gurkhas detached from the escort with the transport arrived in time to participate in beating off the final assault. "Flathead Left" was thus held; the troops were able to consolidate their hold of the summit during the night and the column spent the night in camp undisturbed.

**Comments on the fighting.**—Throughout the day all available aeroplanes of the 20th Squadron, from Bannu and Tank, had rendered great assistance with bombs and machine guns, although flying conditions were by no means too favourable for the airmen. In spite of these difficulties they maintained a constant patrol over "Flathead Left," repeatedly coming down to within a very short distance above the heads of the Mahsuds on the summit. Even when their bombs and ammunition were exhausted, some of the airmen remained circling above the scene of action, thereby intimidating the Mahsuds

by their presence alone from attacking the hard-pressed Gurkhas. Three machines, however, were badly hit by rifle fire, the airmen managing to make emergency landings, two within a short distance of "Flathead Left" and the third in the Shuza Valley. They all escaped capture. The two aviators landing in the Shuza Valley were safely brought into Tank by some Bhattani intelligence agents. It was largely due to the support of the aeroplanes that "Flathead Left" was successfully held. A few of the heavier machines from Mianwali had also carried out some bombing flights further afield during the day.

This whole action was unquestionably the most stubbornly contested affair of the entire campaign. The enemy's *lashkars* on this day amounted to not less than 4000 and certainly included a strong contingent of Wana Wazirs, probably 700 strong. Owing to the heavy drain of troops entailed by escort and protection duties, only a few battalions of the Striking Force had been available for real combatant duties. The casualties in the units so engaged were heavy, especially in British officers of whom 15 fell. The total losses amounted to about 450 of all ranks. The tribesmen suffered an equal number of casualties in killed and severely wounded alone. It is estimated that 250 Mahsuds and some 70 Wazirs were killed. Many rifles lost by them were subsequently recovered on the ground. The Mahsuds had not only fought with reckless courage, but had also taken full advantage of the difficult, broken, country whence accurate fire was skilfully employed to cover the assaults delivered by special parties of swordsmen. The tribesmen again showed appreciable tactical ability in combining fire and shock action. Nevertheless, in hand-to-hand fighting the Indian troops, particularly the Gurkhas on "Flathead Left," had shown a gratifying and increasing superiority.

**The Force halts at Asa Khan.**—The next three days, 15th to 17th January, passed off uneventfully. Column Headquarters, with the 67th Brigade, remained three days at Asa Khan, employed in preparations for the next advance. These tasks consisted mainly in posting and consolidating piquets, while the wounded were being evacuated and reinforcements absorbed. One piquet, amongst others, was posted forward, on 15th, on "Marble Arch" itself, this feature being then found to be deserted. Such is the tribesman's way of surrendering his advantages. Minor skirmishing was the only form of fighting that occurred.

On their side the Mahsud *lashkars*, as soon as the action died down, began to melt away and to carry off the dead and wounded, this being their customary procedure after any heavy fighting. The Wana Wazir *lashkar* also dispersed, apparently declaring an intention of not returning to renew the fighting. Peace overtures, at the moment, also reached the Political Officer at Jandola from the Mahsuds. It seemed unlikely that these were really sincere, but rather intended to delay the British advance, so they were dismissed. The "anti-peace" following of Mulla Fazl Din and of Muza Khan was credibly reported as being still very strong. Curiously enough, pressure was being put on General Climo from India not to continue his advance much further into Waziristan, so as to be free to deal with the Wana Wazirs in the spring. In view of the situation, however, it seemed ill-advised to turn back, so General Climo only acceded to these requests on the understanding that he should not be required to desist from pushing forward before the 28th January, and then only in the event of the Mahsuds having made full submission. In that contingency he proposed to leave 6 battalions at Kotkai and to proceed to Wana with the remaining 11.

At length on 18th January the Striking Force, now strengthened by the arrival of 3rd Guides from the Line of Communication, moved forward another 4 miles to Sora Rogha plateau. Little opposition was encountered, although, in the evening, an attack materialized on two of the camp piquets, and this considerably delayed the completion of their protection. At Sora Rogha a camp was formed and there a long halt became necessary, since the Striking Force could not set out on a further advance until a full ten days' supply had been accumulated at this point. This precaution was inevitable in view of a possible interruption of the convoys on the Line of Communication. Fortunately, no such interruption ever occurred during the campaign. The troops remained at Sora Rogha Camp until 27th January.

**The halt at Sora Rogha.**—Sora Rogha possessed many advantages as a camping ground; space was adequate, the surface good and protection simple. In addition, it afforded just sufficient, if difficult, space for an aerodrome, a most valuable adjunct, since it enabled the pilots flying from Bannu or Tank to land and acquire information from the troops as to their tactical requirements. There existed one serious drawback, however; the plateau lay 500 feet above the river level and water had thus to be carried up to camp.

With the 20th January the second stage of the campaign may be said to have come to a close. On the whole this stage was to be regarded not only as satisfactory, but also as most reassuring. Steady progress had been made, much fighting at close quarters had taken place, and, last but not least, the enemy's resistance had unquestionably been broken. During the period from 17th December to 20th January some twenty actions had been fought in which, on nearly every occasion, more than a brigade had

been engaged. The fighting round Asa Khan marked the climax of the Mahsuds' efforts, and especially of their determined attacks. Still more gratifying might be regarded the improvement that had taken place in the behaviour and fighting aptitude of the Striking Force. The campaign had virtually become a period of practical training, during which the originally raw units were acquiring valuable experience and thereby a heightened confidence in their own powers. The troops were gaining the consciousness that the enemy was at length realising his ever-growing inferiority in the struggle. Equally noteworthy was the success that had attended the attempt to conduct these mountain operations by night. Leaders, no less than troops, were gaining in confidence. Nevertheless, there was still no room for taking risks. Two more battalions of Gurkhas were placed under orders to join the Waziristan Force in exchange for some of its weaker constituent troops. Further quantities of defence stores, supplies and ammunition were requisitioned; new aeroplanes were also demanded. In spite of all movements among the Mahsuds and enquiries from the Indian Government as to a possible cessation of hostilities, General Climo determined to advance into the heart of the enemy's country.



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE OPERATIONS IN THE VICINITY  
OF BARARI TANGI

## CHAPTER X

### FROM SORA ROGHA TO PIAZHA RAGHA—THE THIRD STAGE OF THE ADVANCE

**The Barari Tangi.**—The usual procedure of consolidating all adjacent high ground, both up and down the Tank Zam Valley, followed the arrival of the Striking Force at Sora Rogha. In the meantime, supplies were being concentrated in anticipation of a further advance. But the Mahsuds were slow to recover from the effects of the fighting of 14th January, and so the days went by without any incident worthy of note. On the other hand, further down the valley the village of Nai Kach, situated near Kotkai, was burnt on the 19th as a reprisal for the mutilation of the body of a British officer killed near that place. Preparations for the impending stage forward were completed by the 29th.

The next advance was to lead through another difficult defile, called Barari Tangi, which is formed by the Tank Zam River as it cuts its way through the Sarkai Ghar ridge. This gorge, situated  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the north of Sora Rogha Camp, is some 300 yards long and 60 yards broad, with precipitous sides 100 feet high. In the Tangi itself—looking upstream—the river forms a distinct double curve, and above the defile it soon inclines to the north-west as the valley widens out again. In the defile it is also fed by a little torrent coming from the north, named the Barari Algad. Above the junction of these streams three important features command the road as



it emerges from the gorge. Between the Tank Zam and the Barari Algad there stands a ridge culminating in two heights, called "Barari Centre" and "The Barrier" respectively, whilst on the right bank and opposite the last-named summit there rises a lower, but rocky and bushy bluff called "Gibraltar." The existence of this last-named important feature had not been discovered by reconnaissances sent out from Sora Rogha. The first step preceding a further advance was the occupation of the Sarkai Ghar ridge on either side of the river. That portion lying on the right or western bank of the Tank Zam was not only more difficult, as well as higher, but also afforded more cover than that situated on the left bank. From this western ridge a good field of view over the whole of the surrounding country and hills was obtainable. By 20th January the Mahsuds had withdrawn as far as Sarwek (2 miles west of Sora Rogha and of the Tangi) and Ahmadwam (just above the Tangi). Their numbers had at first dwindled away to 200 at either place, for the tribesmen disappeared to their homes after the previous action to remove their dead and wounded as well as to replenish their supplies. Nevertheless, they soon began to return and reinforcements, including some Wazirs from Shakai, also arrived.

**The capture of the dominant heights on 23rd January.**— On 23rd January, marching once more by night, General Lucas led 3 battalions, 1/55th Rifles, 2/5th Gurkhas and 2/9th Gurkhas, across the difficult level ground and up the steep slopes of the Sarkai Ghar on the right or west bank of the Tank Zam. With these troops he succeeded in occupying the crest without loss, and covered the construction of a post on the end of the ridge, subsequently known as "Bluff Piquet." The Mahsuds from Ahmadwam engaged the 2/9th Gurkhas while covering the construction

of the post, and inflicted some casualties ; notwithstanding this attack the work was completed at 13.45 hrs. No sooner did the covering troops begin to withdraw than the Mahsuds again attacked the former advanced company somewhat fiercely. In spite of rifle fire, grenades and machine-gun fire from aeroplanes, they followed up the attempts which only slackened off as they came under the well-directed fire of the guns and howitzers in action on the valley floor. Thirty casualties among the Gurkhas resulted, and these might have been considerably heavier but for the effective intervention of the low-flying aeroplanes of the 20th Squadron working in conjunction with the fire of the artillery. The airmen were now making use of Sora Rogha aerodrome, to the great benefit of their co-operation with the troops.

Heavy rain and snow, with consequent low visibility, precluded any flying on the 24th and so further movements were cancelled. But on the 25th an operation, very similar in character to that carried out on the 23rd, enabled the corresponding post on the left bank of the Tank Zam to be constructed above the Karkanai ravine. The 1/57th Rifles, while covering its construction, were heavily attacked by Mahsuds and suffered slight loss, but well-directed artillery fire, after contributing to the initial repulse of the tribesmen, once more deterred them from a further attack. On the whole, it seemed as though the fierce, aggressive spirit of the Mahsuds' onslaughts was on the wane. The casualties suffered by them in previous encounters were evidently proving somewhat of a deterrent to their recklessness. They had, moreover, clearly lost a large proportion of their most experienced fighting men in the engagements of the past five weeks. Their losses had been truly heavy in proportion to their total combatant resources.

**The passage of the Tangi.**—The Barari Tangi being thus secured from either flank, work was undertaken on the roads leading up to the defile on the same day. Simultaneously, on 26th, the 43rd Brigade arrived from Kotkai, the 68th Brigade having moved up to this place from Jandola for the protection of the Line of Communication. With the arrival of both these brigades the advance could now be carried a step further. The first approach to "Barari Centre" was already covered, but the capture of this feature still formed an indispensable preliminary to the attack on the more formidable point, known as "The Barrier." This latter height offered most propitious ground for the Mahsuds to oppose the advance of the column. To the southward and south-eastward, or the side of probable attack, it presented a steep face, ending in a precipitous crest, while the summit of the ridge itself was but a few feet wide also affording good cover. The reverse slope was gentle and would favour retreat. Owing to this conformation it must offer a difficult nature of target to the artillery of the attack. Altogether it was an ideal spot for the tribesmen's favourite tactics when on the defensive.

In order to avoid the casualties which a direct daylight attack might involve, General Skeen decided to carry out another night march, whereby he hoped to capture "Barari Centre." Then, with the latter point in his possession, he proposed to carry "The Barrier" by assault before the enemy should have had time to concentrate for its defence. In accordance with this plan General Lucas marched off at 05.00 hrs. with 2/5th Gurkhas, 1/55th Rifles, 109th Infantry and 2 companies of 3rd Guides, heading straight for "Barari Centre." By daybreak, or at about 07.00 hrs., that point had been taken, and General Lucas' troops were in position to support the

attack on "The Barrier." At the same moment the advanced guard of the main column, consisting of 57th Rifles and 2/150th Infantry, entered the Tangi. In rear of these troops came a special detachment, comprising 4/39th Garhwal Rifles and 2 companies of 2/9th Gurkhas, detailed for the capture of "The Barrier." The advanced guard brushed aside some slight opposition in the Tangi itself, whereupon the flanking detachment, as soon as it was clear of the defile, made straight for "The Barrier." The Mahsuds were either disheartened or surprised, for they offered no opposition. The ridge was thus captured by 10.00 hrs. and work was immediately taken in hand for the construction of a post on its summit. Meanwhile, in the valley the advanced guard had also made progress, but not altogether unopposed. The vanguard was nearing Bangiwala, having passed "Gibraltar," when the piquet of the 57th Rifles, detailed to occupy the latter feature, was held up by accurate fire from some difficult ground much cut up by *nalas* and covered with scrub that lay half a mile to the south. Reinforcements were sent up; but nothing was achieved until 2 companies of 2/9th Gurkhas, skilfully led and covered by accurate artillery fire, succeeded in clearing the enemy out of his shelter and proceeded to seize "Gibraltar." All the dominant features being now occupied, the column was able to encamp at Ahmadwam. But the transport, owing to lack of space, turned back to Sora Rogha, together with the 67th Brigade. Casualties did not exceed 70 for the day; the Mahsuds were believed to have lost only half that number. Such was the situation on the morning of 29th January, when the construction of the posts on the various points captured on the previous day was completed.

**The political situation at the close of January.**—The political situation and the schemes set on foot by both

Mahsuds and Wazirs at a distance from the battlefield now merit attention, since the full effect of these endeavours was now to make itself felt. While the Striking Force was still at Sora Rogha, the Mahsud *maliks*, as already stated, had begun making overtures for an armistice. Simultaneously, they had been intriguing with the Afghans, principally with the officials at Khost, this place having throughout the campaign been the focus of all unrest. But the advances made by the Mahsuds to the representatives of the Indian Government were so obviously at variance with the behaviour of the *lashkars* in the field that their protestations were to meet with but scant credence. Had the Mahsuds as a whole really intended to submit and to accept the Government terms, it was clear that they would have done so long ago. The conditions laid before the *maliks* at General Climo's *jirga* at Jandola at the end of December had been accepted, signed and sealed by the former on behalf of the tribe; yet they had never been fulfilled. There could exist no possible doubt whatsoever that the *maliks* were unable to exercise any effective or lasting influence on their fellow-tribesmen. In fact, the contumacious attitude of the Mahsuds was beginning to render more and more problematical the possibility of dealing with the Wana Wazirs before the summer, a distinctly vexatious circumstance which threatened a prolongation of military operations into the following winter. Consequently, a communication was sent about this time to the tribe as a whole, wherein the fresh intentions of the Government regarding eventual terms of peace were indicated. These terms were :—

- (i) The original terms of 3rd November, as subsequently amended at the close of December at Jandola, were now declared null and void.

- (ii) Negotiations were not to be reopened with the tribe until the stipulated number of rifles should be surrendered and fines paid in full as a token of good faith.
- (iii) The surrender of 200 extra Government rifles was required to save Kaniguram, and a like number to save Makin from devastation.

Finally, the Mahsuds were informed that, unless a definite acceptance of these fresh terms was now received, recourse would be made to punitive measures from the day of the arrival of the Striking Force at Janjal (near Dwa Toi) for the purpose of enforcing the conditions laid before them.

**Afghan support for the Mahsuds.**—From the side of the Afghans the Mahsuds obviously had a better but different source for hope, since there was still present at Wana an Afghan irregular force to which Wazirs and Mahsuds alike had repeatedly turned with entreaties and even with threats, in order to obtain from its commander, Shah Daula, some material assistance and more particularly the loan of his artillery. He had hitherto declined to do anything more for the Wazirs than make them an occasional and meagre distribution of small-arm ammunition. This had proved rather more than disappointing to the tribesmen. The Mahsuds, growing alarmed at their repeated failures to check the advance of the Striking Force, now began to renew their appeals to Khost. At first they met with a flattering but empty reception from the anti-British Afghan officials at that place. Later, however, the influence of the more reckless party began to make itself felt and Afghan emissaries who had long ago appeared in the Mahsud country thereupon began to spread among the tribesmen definite promises of actual Afghan reinforcements provided with artillery. Shah Daula, still at

Wana, was at length persuaded by his own countrymen not only to organize a Wazir *lashkar*, but also to strengthen it with the loan of his two six-pounder mountain guns. Among the Mahsuds, too, Afghan adventurers redoubled their efforts and it was largely due to their promises that these indefatigable firebrands, Mulla Fazl Din and Musa Khan, were able to raise a *lashkar* some 1200 strong among the notorious Shabi Khel and Abdullai sections of the tribe. It was this *lashkar* that had assembled to the north of the Barari Tangi, but had failed to check the advance of the Striking Force through the defile.

**Afghan artillery arrives.**—By 29th January the Wana Wazir *lashkar*, raised by Shah Daula and accompanied by two Afghan six-pounder mountain guns, had joined the Mahsuds in position in the Tank Zam Valley above Ahmadwam Camp. Some skirmishing then took place with the Striking Force and the enemy's artillery for the first time came into action on that day at Shin Konr. It was soon manifest that these much-vaunted pieces would prove innocuous. Their range did not exceed 2000 yards, and the majority of their shell turned out to be blind. Hostilities were then interrupted, for a heavy rainstorm came on which turned the camping ground at Ahmadwam into a morass. All further operations were thus necessarily delayed until 1st February, while causeways were being constructed in and around camp with a view to an early advance. In the meantime the defence of the Line of Communication received attention; the fortified posts in the vicinity of Ahmadwam were strengthened and garrisoned by 109th Infantry. Fresh troops were also moved up for defence purposes, two additional battalions being brought up the Tank Zam Valley, after being relieved by cavalry in the foothills as far as Kaur Bridge.

**The fighting round Aka Khel.**—Encouraged by the arrival

of Shah Daula and his guns, as well as by the presence of other Afghan notorieties, the combined Mahsud and Wazir *lashkars* had been growing in number until they exceeded the most unusual total of 4000 tribesmen armed with modern rifles, supported by about half that number of auxiliaries carrying obsolete weapons. These were all distributed in the valley between Bangiwala and Dwa Toi. It should be noted that north of the Barari Tangi the character of the country undergoes some change. The ground becomes less bare and supports much scrub and bush. This had the double effect of favouring hostile snipers and of hampering aerial observation. Deep, precipitous, little ravines also become more frequent, a circumstance which would greatly assist surprise attacks against the flanks of any troops advancing up the valley bed. Reconnaissance and intelligence reports had by now located the main body of the enemy at Shin Konr, while there was evidence of the presence of many smaller detachments posted along the road as far downstream as the outposts at Ahmadwam. There was, accordingly, every reason to foresee that some opposition would be offered to a further advance. Feeling more confident as to the capabilities of his troops and desirous of avoiding casualties, General Skeen decided once more to carry out a night march. Early on 1st February General Gwyn-Thomas, with a mixed force of 3 battalions, some pioneers and sappers and miners, moved out of camp at 03.15 hrs. just after the moon had set. Advancing in column of route along the Tank Zam under close cover of the right or western bank, the column marched 2 miles and had occupied this very difficult stretch of country before the Mahsuds became aware at daybreak, or more than two hours later, that such an operation was being attempted. In the meantime, a similar movement was being carried



out on the left bank of the Tank Zam. In this case 1½ battalions, supported by a section of guns from No. 27 Mountain Battery, marched off at 04.15 hrs. to piquet that side of the valley from Bangiwala past "Slug Hill," and as far as the high ground above Aka Khel. The operation was only discovered by a detachment of Mahsuds in occupation of Aka Khel itself, when it was on the point of completion. There the surprise proved too great for the tribesmen. After opening a wild and ineffective fire they fled up the valley, whereupon the troops hastily occupied all their objectives without loss. By daylight the entire ground on either side of the Tank Zam was held and in process of being strengthened. Soon after, the two Afghan guns opened fire from a point in front of a cave at Shin Konr. This peculiar position had been selected so that they might be quickly withdrawn into the cave in the event of aerial attack. Offering a favourable target they were promptly engaged by a section of 2.75 mountain guns in action on Aka Khel Plateau, and silenced in two rounds.

**The collapse of the Mahsud.**—With this striking success, achieved at so little cost, any serious opposition that had been planned by the Mahsuds for that day virtually collapsed. Neither did they make any further effort to attack the ground now held by the Striking Force. They seemed to be entirely dispirited by the double failure; first the loss of the strong ground on the right of the Tank Zam, secondly, the lamentable display made by the Afghan guns. During that whole day the Bristol Fighters of the 20th Squadron reported large groups of tribesmen in close proximity of the outposts. These were either fired upon by machine guns from the air or shelled by the howitzers and 2.75 guns, the latter using half-charges. This procedure proved so effective as to put an end to any thought of determined resistance on the part

of the Mahsuds. The discomfiture of the enemy was, in fact, so far complete that they ventured on nothing more than continuous long-range sniping.

**Further advance hampered by cold weather.**—The climax of the campaign was now clearly passed. The enemy's power of attack had been definitely broken. Henceforward the operations were to assume a character rather more similar to that of previous frontier warfare. This result was largely due to the steady improvement that had been taking place in the fighting quality of the troops, in conjunction with the moral effect of the severe losses which had been inflicted on the tribesmen at the outset of the operations. Experience had improved the battalions individually, while it welded the whole Striking Force into a self-confident organism. But due credit must also be given to the steadfast quality of the leadership through a difficult crisis, no less than to the readiness with which General Skeen and his staff had assumed responsibility for attempting such an audacious experiment as that of ordering night marches with raw troops in very difficult country. The night operations leading to the signal success achieved at Aka Khel had once more and very conclusively shown the incalculable value of effective surprise in dealing with irregular combatants. This was the direct outcome of a well-conducted night operation. An immense impression was created among the Mahsuds both by the operation itself and, still more perhaps, by a clear appreciation of the military value of the troops so engaged. The tribesman was made to feel that he had met his match. In addition, the total failure of Shah Daula's guns, which had been witnessed by the concourse of Mahsuds and Wazirs assembled in the vicinity of Shin Konr, now combined with extreme disappointment of the hopes previously raised by Afghan adventurers and

Mullahs, had destroyed every vestige of belief in any effective intervention on the part of the Amir. It was subsequently reported that the presence at Shin Konr of Haji Abdur Raziq, late court Mullah at Kabul, had been regarded by the Mahsuds as possessing some official significance and that the Amir was about to declare his intentions in their favour. The blow was thus all the more severe: it was nothing short of a moral *débâcle*. Nevertheless, the campaign was by no means concluded. The Mahsuds were still a long way from surrender, while the nature of the country and the growing severity of the climate were to render the task of the troops really arduous. Intense cold was setting in. Snow was lying on all the summits, while in the valleys, after falling, it only melted to produce mud. Then the snow suddenly ceased, giving way to bitter frost. Neither were difficulties of supply growing any less. As the Mahsud seemed inclined to revert to sniping tactics, so the protection of the lengthening Line of Communication might well give rise to anxiety; it was, at any rate, absorbing an increasing number of troops.

Although the tribesmen who had retired up the valley towards Dwa Toi were reported to be dispersing to their homes, it was clear from aeroplane reconnaissance, confirmed by later intelligence reports, that a considerable number of Mahsuds still remained in the vicinity of Shin Konr. Caution was, therefore, as necessary as it had been during the earlier advance. Consequently, as soon as movement became possible, General Skeen directed that yet another night march should be carried out. As the success of these night operations grew more pronounced, so they were to assume a larger scale. At midnight on 2nd/3rd February the 3rd Guides moved from camp and occupied a neighbouring small village and tower,

christened "Cliff End." They were followed at 01.00 hrs. by 2/5th Gurkhas, who were entrusted with the capture of a village 1 mile further distant, known as "Cloud End." Both these points lie on the left bank of the Tank Zam and downstream of Shin Konr village. Soon after the troops had started, a bitter wind sprang up to the accompaniment of sleet. In view of this change in the weather, and owing to their isolation from camp, the Gurkhas were recalled at 04.30 hrs. But the Guides, being closer at hand, were ordered to fortify their position. By that time the two battalions had suffered much from the cold. The Mahsuds, however, remained inactive. The strength of their *lashkar* was now estimated at less than 1500 Mahsuds, with about 100 Wana Wazirs.

As the weather remained most unfavourable, there was no option but to abandon operations until the 5th. On that morning the advanced guard started at 01.00 hrs., followed by the main body at 05.30 hrs. The temperature had fallen to 25 degrees of frost and there was a piercing wind. Each time that the troops forded the Tank Zam they emerged with their legs caked with ice, sometimes up to the knees. Except for the centre of the main stream, every water channel was frozen over. The construction of *sangars* or other works necessitated the handling of frozen materials, while the men had no means of warming themselves. In spite of such adverse conditions, the march was continued without undue delay, for the Mahsuds offered surprisingly little resistance. Progress, indeed, actually grew more rapid and the construction of posts proceeded smoothly. Finally Janjal was reached at 17.00 hrs. at the cost of a single casualty. There the column encamped in order to resume its search for a camping ground next day. On the 6th a suitable spot was found on a plateau situated west of the Piazhra Algad ravine, which

came to be called "Piazha Raghza." On the following day, 7th February, convoys set to work on the usual concentration of supplies. Although the distance from Sora Rogha to Piazha Raghza is only 9 miles, the cold, accompanied by continual alternating falls of snow and rain, rendered the work tedious and exacting. So the accumulation of the necessary amount of stores at Piazha Raghza was only completed with difficulty.

**The Striking Force at Piazha Raghza.**—The Striking Force was to remain in camp at Piazha Raghza until the 14th. During that period permanent piquets were established as far upstream as Dwa Toi, the point of junction of the Dara Toi and the Baddar Toi.

In accordance with the declaration made to the tribe before the troops left Sora Rogha, the punitive destruction of villages was taken in hand after the arrival of the Striking Force at Piazha Raghza. This work was carried out systematically in the vicinity, more especially in the country of the Shabi Khel. From the villages thus destroyed much firewood was collected.

One change of some significance was now observed in the habits of the Mahsuds. Day sniping into camp had hitherto been the rule during the campaign; the practice had been responsible for many casualties, especially during the first days spent at Palosina in the previous month. But now the tribesmen reverted to their older practice of sniping by night. It would seem as though the Mahsud had at last come to realise the fact that aimed fire by day is productive of better results than indiscriminate fire by night, the latter, indeed, being little better than waste of ammunition. But now, as his *morale* and his fierce attacks declined, so did his newly acquired military insight. So almost every night Piazha Raghza Camp became a mark for the sniping tribesman. The piquets also suffered

from similar attentions, but never to the like extent; these targets, because so small, were probably less inviting for this form of rifle practice.

On 14th February the 67th Brigade arrived at Piazhza Raghza from Sora Rogha, where one battalion of the 43rd Brigade had been ordered to remain. The remainder of the 43rd Brigade received orders to remain at Piazhza Raghza, and it then assumed the duties of No. 3 Section, Tank Line of Communication.

## CHAPTER XI

### FROM PIAZHA RAGHZA TO MAKIN AND KANIGURAM— THE LAST STAGE

#### **The distribution of the Waziristan Force in early February.**

—As soon as the Striking Force marched out from Piazhā Raghza a total change came over the nature of the Waziristan operations. The Mahsuds had still given no sign of accepting the last Government ultimatum, although their resistance was by now really broken and becoming more spasmodic as well as more vicious in character. There appeared little chance of bringing them to a decisive action. The prescribed days of grace had expired on the arrival of the troops at Janjal, and the expedition now assumed an entirely punitive character. In other words, military superiority had altogether passed over to the invader, while the enemy was relapsing into the ways of true guerilla warfare. Accordingly, the methods of the Striking Force were to undergo some modification, and the column was able to move more rapidly ; on the other hand, the lengthening Line of Communication was creating a problem of its own.

**The Tochi garrisons.**—It is, therefore, not without interest at this juncture to consider the distribution of, and the functions performed by, the Waziristan Force as a whole, since the responsibility of that Force had been in nowise decreased by the recent course of events. In the first place, although the Striking Force had been withdrawn from the Tochi Valley at the end of November, it had none



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A VALLEY OF CENTRAL WAZIRISTAN WHERE THE COUNTRY BEGINS TO GROW SLIGHTLY WOODED.





the less been necessary to maintain a considerable number of troops in that area. Nominally, these were Lines of Communication defence units, but their presence was in itself designed to serve a more important purpose. So at this moment (February, 1920) there still remained the following units in the Tochi Valley :—

*No. 1 Section, Bannu L. of C. Defences :*

*Area*—From Mianwali to Kalabagh (inclusive) to Pezu (inclusive) and Idak (exclusive).

*Headquarters*—Bannu.

*Troops*—45th Infantry Brigade with a detachment of cavalry, various sections of artillery, an armoured motor battery and other details.

*No. 2 Section, Bannu L. of C. Defences :*

*Area*—Idak district.

*Headquarters*—Dardoni.

*Troops*—47th Infantry Brigade, 2 squadrons, 2 sections mountain artillery and other details.

The necessity of keeping up such forces in that region may not at first be quite apparent. But, if it be considered that Afghan raids into the Tochi or Kurram Valleys were still possible, though not actually very probable, then the need of such a step becomes more manifest. Moreover, although, as it turned out, no such formal incursion took place and no grave disturbance occurred in these valleys, there existed sufficient grounds for taking a serious view of such contingencies. This will be the more readily granted when certain minor events of the type given below are taken into account. For example, on—

26th November, 1919, a heterogeneous body of raiders, mostly coming from across the Afghan border,

raided the Kohat cavalry lines; rifles and ammunition were looted.

10th December. Abdullai Mahsuds, with a few Tazi Khel Wazirs, attacked a piquet at Idak. The attack was shortly repeated at Dardoni.

31st December. The railway east of Kohat was raided and a train derailed.

24th February, 1920. A *lashkar* of 2000 tribesmen from across the Afghan border invaded the Kurram district. They were beaten back by the Militia, the Malli Khel tribe losing 160 casualties.

27th February. A gang of 500 marauders attacked a piquet in the Kurram Valley, but were repulsed by the Militia with local assistance.

These incidents prove the wisdom of maintaining a force in the Bannu region adequate to deal with even a serious attack by the tribesmen, whether supported by Afghans or not.

**The Tank Zam Line of Communication.**—To turn to Southern Waziristan. By February, 1920, the distribution of the troops had assumed an aspect familiar in previous frontier warfare. A small, compact, Striking Force was advancing through openly hostile country at the head of a Line of Communication 30 to 40 miles long, whilst further back, in rear of its advanced base and railhead (Tank), conditions were such that military precautions could not be relaxed with any real degree of safety. The protection of the communications of the Striking Force, extending as they did from Darya Khan on the left bank of the Indus to Piazhia Raghza in the heart of the Mahsud country, was no light task. The defence of this Line thus absorbed a considerable number of troops. These were now divided into three sections as follows :—

*No. 1 Section, Tank L. of C. Defences :*

*Area*—From Darya Khan to a point midway between Khirgi and Jandola, also to Pezu (exclusive).

*Troops*—3 regiments cavalry, a few guns, 62nd Infantry Brigade.

*No. 2 Section, Tank L. of C. Defences :*

*Area*—From the point named above to the Ahnai Tangi (inclusive).

*Troops*—68th Infantry Brigade, a section mountain artillery and details. A few extra battalions joined this section later when the area was finally increased.

*No. 3 Section, Tank L. of C. Defences :*

*Area*—From Ahnai Tangi (exclusive) to beyond Piazhia Raghza.

*Troops*—43rd Infantry Brigade and details.

The cavalry regiments could most profitably be employed as far west as the foothills of Waziristan, and so were allotted to No. 1 Section. The number of administrative and transport units maintained on the Line of Communication forward from Tank was very large, as might have been expected to be the case, since pack transport alone could be employed north of Khirgi. As was the case in the Tochi Valley, certain minor raids and frontier incidents which took place as far south as the Zhob Valley were ample proof of the necessity for these measures of protection. In particular, the small but lawless tribe of Sherannis, inhabiting the extreme south-east of Waziristan, were inclined to be troublesome. With a view to dealing with any acts of hostility from that quarter, a small auxiliary base had been established at Saggu, situated to the south of Tank at a distance roughly equidistant between

that place and Dera Ismail Khan. The Sherannis eventually complied with the Government ultimatum presented to them by the Political Officers of the district. These incidents, however, did not call for any military measures of importance, and so will be passed over without further mention.

**The Striking Force.**—The Striking Force, on leaving Piazhia Raghza, consisted of the following units :—

Column Headquarters.

Administrative and Transport Units.

No. 6 Mountain Battery (3·7-inch howitzers).

No. 27 (Indian) Mountain Battery (2·75 guns).

*67th Infantry Brigade :*

2/5th Gurkhas.

2/9th Gurkhas.

4/3rd Gurkhas (joined on 12th February).

1/55th Coke's Rifles.

3rd Guides.

55th Co. Sappers and Miners.

3/34th Sikh Pioneers.

On 16th February 3/11th Gurkhas arrived from India and joined the Striking Force as column troops. 1/55th Rifles alone had formed part of the Striking Force from the day of its departure up the Tank Zam from Jandola. The Guides had arrived from No. 2 Section L. of C. on 18th January, while the four battalions of Gurkhas had all arrived one after the other from India either in relief of other units that were relegated to the Line of Communication, or as additions to the strength of the whole force. No change of any kind had been made in the case of the artillery and engineer units of the Force.

The above survey of the distribution and complex

duties of the Waziristan Force at this date well serves to illustrate the large number of combatant troops that are required to enable even a small Striking Force of well under 10,000 men to continue guerilla operations against a restless enemy, after penetrating for a distance of some 40 miles into a barren, mountainous, region where its Line of Communication is exposed to attack or interruption. The average strength of the entire Waziristan Force during the campaign was in round numbers :—

45,000 combatants.

38,000 non-combatants.

Yet the Striking Force, during the last stage of the operations, numbered between one-fifth and one-quarter of that large number of combatants, supported by an almost equal total of unarmed "followers."

It is now time to consider the course of the operations of the Derajat Column as it left Piazhā Raghza on the morning of 15th February. At 05.00 hrs. on that day the 43rd Brigade, being now Line of Communication troops, sent out some two and a half battalions from Piazhā Raghza Camp to cover the left flank of the Striking Force, and to post permanent piquets up the Dwa Toi Valley. The column followed at 06.00 hrs. One and a half hours later the advanced guard entered the Dwa Toi defile. Here it was met by sniping. Though easily driven back, the enemy continued harassing the column in this fashion until it had reached Marobi and posted its piquets well in advance of that place. Camp was pitched by 16.00 hrs. and the piquets were all in position two hours later.

**The advance to Tauda China.**—On the 16th the advance was continued some 2 miles further forward as far as Tauda China. The Striking Force now stood within about 2 miles of Makin. Makin, it should be noted, is the name

given not to one village, but to the entire area, over 2 miles long, that lies along the widening valley floor. It is extensively cultivated in well-terraced fields, above which are situated several larger villages and lesser hamlets. The camp of the Striking Force was sited a few hundred yards east of the Tauda China stream.

**Punitive operations in the Makin area.**—On the 17th, during the morning, more permanent piquets were posted and empty transport animals were returned to Piazza Raghza. At 14.00 hrs. a party of 50 Mahsuds attacked a detachment of 4/3rd Gurkhas engaged in covering fatigue parties collecting firewood in a demolished village. Although driven off, a small party of the tribesmen took refuge in a village, where they fought desperately. This capacity for resistance of a few men who have taken refuge in strong buildings had been experienced in previous campaigns in Waziristan and on the frontier generally. On this occasion the entire battalion of Gurkhas was finally required to carry the village. When this had been accomplished, it was found that the casualties could not be removed owing to accurate sniping fire; thus it became imperative for the troops to wait for darkness before attempting that task. In carrying out any sort of operation against, or in the immediate vicinity of, these frontier villages, experience of all previous expeditions showed how necessary it was to exercise adequate precautions against such sniping, since the tribesmen, being familiar with every corner of the locality and knowing all ranges to a yard, could prove very deadly in this class of sharpshooting. The operations about Makin again proved the necessity of such precautions, the more so because there was no possibility of disguising the presence or the intentions of the Striking Force. Surprise, that element so necessary in carrying out any punitive raid with success, was thus difficult of attainment.







**Devastation of that area.**—Since no attempt had yet been made by the Mahsuds to comply with the terms of the ultimatum regarding the surrender of rifles, devastation was ordered to begin on the 19th. In order to facilitate the execution of these operations it was decided to begin with the occupation of two dominant features, known as "Tree Hill" and "Split Hill," situated north-west and south-west of Tauda China Camp respectively. This task was again carried out under cover of darkness, but the completion of the post on "Tree Hill" was somewhat delayed, for the 4/3rd Gurkhas, detailed for that objective, lost their way in the dark, and when day broke were found to be in occupation of an adjoining height. The incident is said to provide the only instance during this campaign where such an error was committed in a night march; it was attributed to an unavoidable lack of reconnaissance as well as to the difficulty of the ground.

At 06.00 hrs. the main body then left camp, crossed the Tauda China and sought to penetrate well into the Makin area before the enemy should have assembled in sufficient strength to take advantage of the walls and enclosures in order to oppose the advance. Beyond "Tree Hill," however, the ground grew still more difficult. Many fallow fields lay ahead of the troops dominated by three villages standing on higher ground, as well as by several towers, all occupied by tribesmen. To capture the high ground was a matter requiring time, but by 10.00 hrs. the 3/11th Gurkhas had occupied the most important feature of the ground and were about to clear the eastern end of Makin. A sudden hostile attack was now beaten back. Then, as the Gurkhas were assembling to resume their advance, the front line unfortunately came under the fire of our own howitzers then in action near camp. The leading companies gave ground and were followed up by

the Mahsuds, who thereupon caused the 2/9th Gurkhas, standing further on the right, to withdraw. This set-back was most untimely ; it not only encouraged the Mahsuds in their opposition but delayed the whole enterprise. The collection of casualties again took time. Eventually, as it was growing too late to proceed further, the troops were led back to camp, having suffered loss to the extent of 34 killed and 28 wounded. Nevertheless, some towers and hamlets had been destroyed.

Next day, the 20th, the work of destruction was resumed. It was proposed to deal with the villages lying to the south-west of the Dara Toi and to construct a defensible post on "Split Hill." The troops, 1/55th Rifles with pioneers and sappers and miners, left camp at 02.30 hrs. and were at work on "Split Hill," when at 06.45 hrs. the Mahsuds attacked the covering troops. After the enemy had been driven off the work of devastation was carried on for three hours, although 90 casualties were sustained, mostly as the result of accurate sniping. The troops finally withdrew to camp at 15.30 hrs. after demolishing 17 towers, 160 houses and many retaining walls. The total casualties once more showed how necessary it is in this class of work to keep the enemy at a considerable distance, since the sniper is always firing at known ranges under conditions ideal both for cover and for his own safety. Further, it is essential to remember the value of time. Demolitions should be carried out with all speed and no attempt made to secure any spectacular effect. On the other hand, houses should not be fired without express instructions owing to the danger of smoke interfering with any combined operation or blinding aeroplanes and blanketing artillery. Signals made by means of Verey lights are best used to indicate the moment for firing a village. As these lessons were learnt by the Striking Force, so its casualties decreased very greatly.

On the 21st the Omar Khel sub-section of the Bahlolzai section of the tribe came into camp and offered to surrender 12 Government rifles, as well as to refrain from sniping, on the condition that their property should be spared. The offer was accepted and apparently the promise was intended to be observed. Two 3·7-inch howitzers were next sent up to "Split Hill," whence they were set the task of demolishing prominent towers in the Makin area. More noteworthy was the destruction of Marobi, the village home of the egregious Mulla Fazl Din, son of the equally well-known Mulla Powinda. The village had undoubtedly been the scene of the hatching of numerous plots against the lives of British officers, and its destruction was therefore invested with a special significance. It was razed to the ground, only the mosque being left standing.

On the 23rd operations were resumed against villages on the left bank of the Dara Toi. The Omar Khel territory was found to hold no snipers. The next two days were also spent in further devastation.

On the 27th a prominent tower, nicknamed "Eddy-stone," standing at the juncture of the Dara Toi and Dashkal Algad, was destroyed by howitzer fire at a range of 4700 yards in ten rounds, a remarkable result.

On the 28th all towers still standing within howitzer range were one by one demolished. This accounted for 51 such buildings. During these last two days casualties had decreased to only 20 all told.

On the 29th Mahsud *maliks* arrived at Tauda China Camp with the professed intention of saving Kaniguram from destruction by the surrender of the requisite number of rifles. As an earnest of this declaration they produced 103 Government rifles, 103 tribal rifles and Rs.2400. Half of the Government rifles were deficient of bolts; many were without magazines. So the deputation was informed

that it might take back the rifles and that the march on Kaniguram would begin. The rifles, however, were left, the *maliks* departing with protestations to the effect that they would renew their efforts to find the required balance. As it was impossible to regard this travesty of formal submission in a serious light, orders were issued for the column to proceed to Kaniguram in accordance with the intimation made to the tribes in the last Government ultimatum. Rapidity of action appearing needful, it was decided to evacuate Makin next morning and so to withdraw down the Dara Toi as far as Dwa Toi. From that spot the column would follow the Baddar Toi upstream to its destination. Accordingly, on 29th February, a detachment consisting of

3/11th Gurkhas,  
3/34th Sikh Pioneers with  
1 section 27th Mountain Battery

marched to Marobi for the collection of stores from all permanent posts and for other similar duties preceding a retirement.

**The evacuation of Tauda China Camp.**—The withdrawal of the permanent piquets round Makin, more particularly "Split Hill" and "Tree Hill," was to offer some difficulty. A too previous, or hasty, withdrawal of the piquets on the 29th might have betrayed the projected retirement of the column to an undesirable extent. On the other hand, if it were decided to await daylight and carry out the withdrawal on 1st March, such a procedure would have exposed the troops for a still longer time to the attacks of an enemy who, it was thought, might have been goaded into a state of exasperation by the devastation of Makin. There are few operations that call for greater care than a withdrawal of this nature in the face of uncivilized combatants. The

two piquets in question were, therefore, ordered to make good their way back to camp after the moon had set, that was, at about 02.00 hrs. Both piquets after nightfall, however, reported enemy in their vicinity; "Tree Hill" in addition notified two casualties from sniping. Nevertheless, both piquets succeeded in finding their way into camp, a performance highly creditable to the officers in command, as evidence of the precision with which night movements were now being carried out. There was not a little risk in the operation, since it was clear that the Mahsuds were now taking measures to counter this growing practice of the Striking Force. At 05.50 hrs. two battalions moved out from Tauda China Camp to take up a covering position, one on either side of the road to Dwa Toi. The advanced guard, with artillery, followed at 06.15 hrs. in order to take up successive positions with a view to protecting the retirement of the main body. Transport had already been loaded up and was well clear of camp by daybreak. Next the camp piquets withdrew successfully, with the exception of a single piquet, where, owing to mismanagement, the enemy succeeded in taking prisoners. Thus the evacuation of Tauda China Camp was completed. "Booby traps" of various natures were left behind, and it was subsequently reported that several Mahsuds, unable to repress their looting instincts, had by these means been satisfactorily accounted for in the deserted posts and camp.

Virtually surprised by this sudden withdrawal, the enemy followed up the retiring troops with no remarkable determination, although he frequently came under gun and aeroplane fire, while searching for loot and food. The column only suffered 5 casualties during the day. Camp was then pitched for the night at Dwa Toi, where the 43rd Brigade from Piazhra Raghza had already posted two

permanent piquets on either bank of the Baddar Toi above Dwa Toi in order to assist in the operation. This assistance of the 43rd Brigade proved well timed and effective.

**The advance on Kaniguram.**—Next day, 2nd March, was spent in posting piquets for the advance on Kaniguram. Information was also received that the Mahsud *maliks*, having given up all hope of collecting the balance of the rifles as promised three days earlier, had abandoned all attempt to comply with the demand and gone back to their homes.

So next morning, the 3rd, the march of the column was continued up the valley of the Baddar Toi. The heights had already been piqueted by the 43rd Brigade, although the actual construction of the posts had been much hampered by sniping. Such action on the part of the Mahsuds was only to be expected, since the country about Dwa Toi grows more wooded. Small trees and scrub afford the sniper admirable cover against view, both from the ground and from overhead, while the vegetation is still insufficient to curtail his field of vision. The most effective manner of dealing with the sniping nuisance was found to consist in the old practice of detailing picked shots to stalk the snipers or to concentrate carefully aimed fire on their most likely hiding-places. Rifle grenades also proved valuable in clearing wooded ground. At 05.30 hrs. the advanced guard, consisting of 2 battalions, 2 guns and pioneers, marched off with the intention of posting the piquets which preliminary reconnaissance had shown to be necessary further up the valley. These troops had not gone 2 miles when, even before it was broad daylight, they were attacked by heavy fire from concealed snipers. Notwithstanding this opposition, a steady advance and a clever manœuvre on the part of 3rd Guides secured a spur situated on the left bank of the Baddar

Toi and to the west of the Maidan Algad ; this was called " The Dam." Rocks, trees and bushes combined to render the defile before which the column now stood one of the most difficult that had been encountered since leaving Jandola. Heavy fire was enfilading " The Dam " from the right bank, rendering the hold of the infantry on that ground precarious. A section of 2·75 guns had already been ordered to come into action on the ridge to silence the sniping from this and from other directions. The advance of the guns threatened to become a costly affair, when fortunately a section of howitzers was able to open fire from further in rear against the enemy who were enfilading " The Dam." The latter were instantly silenced by the high-explosive shell searching the right bank, whereupon the guns rapidly got into action behind their shields on " The Dam " itself and completed the discomfiture of all remaining snipers. The operation proved a model example of good artillery tactics. That same night the column encamped on the cultivated fields below Ladha.

The next two days, 4th and 5th, were spent in fortifying a strong point at Ladha, in posting piquets and in the construction of a double-camel track with a view to circumventing another difficult gorge, situated less than a mile ahead at a spot called Piazero.

On the 6th, after leaving 3rd Guides as a permanent garrison both at Ladha and in the surrounding posts, the column reached Kaniguram and encamped half a mile to the east of the " town." No opposition had been experienced on the march, but some sniping that occasioned a few casualties was experienced as the camp piquets were posted. The Derajat Column had thus reached the real objective of the expedition. It had spent nearly twelve weeks over the task.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE CONCLUSION OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MAHSUDS

**The surrender of rifles required to save Kaniguram.**—Although the Striking Force had now reached the topographical goal of the expedition, it was still to be seen what effect the arrival of the troops at Kaniguram might exercise upon the Mahsuds. Would the political end of the campaign be attained together with its military objective? Or would history repeat itself and the Mahsuds continue their contumacious attitude?

On 7th March a deputation of Urmars notabilities from Kaniguram visited camp and declared that, since the Mahsud *maliks* had failed to collect the necessary rifles to save their capital from destruction, they (the Urmars) could take no further action in the matter. The attitude of the tribe as a whole now proved distinctly embarrassing. Difficulties unquestionably existed in the way of the collection of the rifles; for instance:—

- (i) Many individuals who were in possession of three or four rifles, though willing to surrender a single one, would think themselves entitled either to the remainder or to some equivalent compensation from their fellow-tribesmen in return for that sacrifice.
- (ii) Numerous rifles were held in a species of joint ownership, a fact which greatly complicated the question of surrender.

- (iii) Many rifles were undoubtedly buried or otherwise concealed, and so remained unknown to the *maliks*.
- (iv) Not a few tribesmen, foreseeing a failure to satisfy the Government ultimatum, would not part with their rifles for fear of making such a surrender in vain.

Nevertheless, it was incontestable that the actual number of rifles demanded could not be regarded as by any manner of means excessive; rather the contrary. It lay well within the capacity of the Mahsuds to give them up, and there had been ample time to collect the modest total at issue. At the moment it was believed that an Oriental tendency to drive bargains and to effect compromises had, in the past, been humoured by Government until the tribesmen failed to comprehend the determination to insist upon the surrender in full. Previous history, however, lends colour to the belief that the Mahsuds were convinced that the Striking Force had now nearly achieved its worst; it might still destroy Kaniguram, but must then retire. These things had happened before, and in any case would not very deeply affect any but the inhabitants of the place itself. The rifles would thus remain, while raiding and looting would eventually make good the losses incurred by the tribesmen during the campaign. Be that as it may, the Mahsuds were now in a sullen mood and preserved their defiant attitude. The *maliks* had obviously lost all control, and the problem of obtaining the submission of the tribe appeared almost as distant as ever.

**The position of the Striking Force; the tribesmen granted a further respite.**—Notwithstanding this impasse, the situation in which the Striking Force now found itself demanded a decision. To use the language of mechanics :

the spring had uncoiled itself to its full extent, and, if further action were in prospect, the machine required reinforcing. A strengthening of the troops, not to mention additional transport, would be necessary before embarking on further or more distant operations. Besides, it might well be asked in which direction might the troops advance ? Had they not reached the centre of the most highly developed, and therefore the most sensitive, area of the Mahsud country ? It had to be admitted, in the words of the Official Account, that it was "impossible to force this tribe of unruly and obdurate individuals, recognizing no responsible leaders and no form of organized government, to make any engagements or to keep such promises if made, once the troops had left the country." With this admission the prospect of dealing with the Wana Wazirs before the summer had totally disappeared. The troops could not leave the Mahsud country without having obtained the formal submission of the Mahsuds and guarantees for their future good behaviour. The problem was how these objects were to be attained. Further devastation remained practicable ; yet even this might, under prevalent conditions, prove a doubtful expedient. Such heavy casualties had been inflicted on the tribes that they now seemed unwilling to stand up in open fight. If they would not fight, how was the lesson to be repeated ? The question was not new in uncivilized warfare. No further alternative now seemed open but a continued military occupation of the country. That being the case, it would be a still more doubtful measure to resort to more destruction, or other forcible methods likely to exasperate the tribesmen still further, since the already scanty resources and amenities of the country might now be required to render the life of the occupying troops more supportable.

**The raid into the Upper Baddar Toi Valley.**—But the moment for an open declaration of the policy of occupation had not quite arrived. Meanwhile, Kaniguram was spared and a further respite was granted to the tribesmen to comply with the Government demands. For one month the Striking Force thus remained in camp outside Kaniguram, and the much-desired operations against the Wazirs were necessarily postponed. During this period the Mahsuds, on the whole, gave but very little trouble. Towards the end of the month a proportion of the tribe seemed to grow more tractable; certain sections began to make genuine efforts to collect and pay fines. Government and tribal rifles trickled in. Nevertheless, those sections that inhabited the country not directly affected by the presence of the Derajat Column still proved obdurate. Amongst the worst offenders were the inhabitants of the Upper Baddar Toi Valley, who believed themselves out of reach of the troops. As they were notorious for contumacy, yet situated within possible range of action, an incursion into their territory was undertaken. Accordingly, a composite force of 2600 rifles and 6 guns with 2000 transport animals was organized and moved up the Baddar Toi on 6th April. No resistance was offered until the troops were pitching camp at about 16.00 hrs. on that evening at Sine Tizha when sniping began. Next morning the column advanced as far as Giga Khel, in order to carry out the destruction of the villages of the Abdur Rahman Khel, a section of well-known recalcitrants. In spite of opposition their towers were demolished. In the afternoon the withdrawal began, but the operation was harassed by some 300 tribesmen who met with little success, except that which they gained against a small party of 4/3rd Gurkhas. These men, who had become entangled in a difficult *nala*, were finally overwhelmed. The regrettable incident was

caused by selecting such a *nala* for withdrawal, when experience of past campaigns had always shown that features of this nature are frequently utilized by the tribesmen in pursuit, probably in order to avoid gunfire. On the 8th the retirement to Kaniguram was completed. Sniping by about a hundred tribesmen began in the morning, and this was followed by a small but determined attack along the stream of the Baddar Toi. A single low-flying aeroplane rendered invaluable assistance in beating back this onslaught. The enemy, consisting apparently of Wazirs from Shakai, were in the end dispersed without much trouble, and at 17.00 hrs. the column was back in camp at Kaniguram, having suffered some 60 casualties. This was the last undertaking of note carried out by the Derajat Column.\*

The remainder of April was spent in constructing a 16-foot graded road, suitable for mechanical transport, between Kaniguram and Ladha.

**The occupation of Waziristan to be continued.**—The time had now come to put into force the policy which it had been at length decided to adopt in Waziristan. The troops were to remain in the country, and roads suitable for mechanical transport were henceforth to be constructed to facilitate its occupation. The march of the troops to Wana was definitely postponed until the autumn. The Headquarters of the Derajat Column were consequently broken up, but the Waziristan Force was to remain in being. In the Tank Zam Valley the 67th Brigade, with one battery of artillery, one field company of sappers and miners and one pioneer battalion, went into a permanent fortified camp at Ladha. The 43rd Brigade remained at Piazhia Raghza. The 68th Brigade was at Sora Rogha, with

\* The total casualties of the Derajat Column are given in Appendix III.

the 62nd Brigade at Tank, to control the remainder of the rocky valley. The 67th Brigade was freed of all protective duties, save those relating to its own security. It would thus be available at any moment for active punitive duties. The three other brigades virtually continued the duties they had hitherto carried out as defence troops of the Line of Communication. The defensible posts along the Tank Zam Valley were gradually strengthened by the completion of additional engineering work or remodelled, and this revision enabled their garrisons to be somewhat reduced. Training was thereby facilitated, whilst the maintenance of stronger movable columns rendered possible a more active form of defence. The adoption of such a policy was followed by excellent results. At the end of May the command of the Waziristan Force devolved upon Brigadier-General Leslie, C.M.G., etc., the former Chief of Staff of the Force.

**The attitude of the Mahsuds during the summer.**—The remainder of 1920 passed off fairly quietly in the Tank Zam Valley. In early July, however, sniping between Ladha and Piazza Raghza increased so far that a punitive enterprise was undertaken on 10th July from the former place. Three battalions and a battery participated in the operation, which aimed at a shelling of Makin and of adjoining villages. The affair was quite successful, but in the withdrawal the Mahsuds gained in boldness to such an extent that they delivered a fierce attack on the 4/39th Garhwal Rifles, inflicting some 60 casualties in an engagement which terminated in a hand-to-hand struggle. But the Mahsuds were beaten back with loss.

During August the attitude of the tribe improved and more rifles were surrendered.

In September and in October there took place a series

of raids and skirmishes in the low-lying country to the south of Tank ; but the central Mahsud tribes remained quiet. At the close of the latter month it was found possible to dispense with the camp of Piazhra Raghza, and its garrison was distributed between Sora Rogha and Ladha. Nevertheless, in the autumn and in the winter, gangs of recalcitrant tribesmen turned their attention to harassing convoys. There was a veritable epidemic of these attacks, alternating with petty skirmishes along the entire Ladha Line. The outbreaks were in themselves more annoying than effective, but the resultant casualties continued mounting up, whilst it remained impossible to relax the minute precautions enforced on this road.

It is of interest to add that in the autumn two 6-inch howitzers were sent to Ladha. As the maximum range of these pieces is over 5 miles, both Makin and Kaniguram lay at the mercy of this artillery. The consternation of the tribesmen on realising the fact is said to have been almost comic.

In the autumn preparations were made to undertake the final and long-delayed operations against the Wana Wazirs.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A SUMMARY OF THE FINAL OPERATIONS AGAINST THE WANA WAZIRS

**The formation of a Wana Column.**—Owing to the manner in which the campaign against the Mahsuds had been prolonged, it had been found impossible to deal with the Wana Wazirs during the late spring of 1920. The summer heat had further rendered the inception of a campaign inadvisable until the late autumn. But in view of the participation of the Wazirs in the original opposition offered by the Mahsuds, and, still more, in consequence of the Afghan intrigues among the Wazir tribes and of the lengthy sojourn of Afghan armed forces at Wana, a punitive expedition against the Wana Wazirs was more than desirable. Indeed, it now became imperative since the Afghan agent, Haji Abdur Raziq, was still in the vicinity of Wana and undoubtedly instigating further mischief among the Wazirs.

In the autumn of 1920, therefore, a "Wana Column" assembled at Jandola, under the orders of Major-General W. S. Leslie, C.M.G., etc., for operations against the Wana Wazirs. The Force consisted of :—

Two infantry brigades, 23rd and 24th. (Each of these comprised one British battalion, while the 24th included the 4/3rd Gurkhas from the 67th Brigade, then at Ladha.)

Two 4-gun mountain batteries (including No. 6 (Howitzer) Battery from the late Derajat Column).



One field company of sappers and miners.

Two pioneer battalions.

One machine gun company.

One squadron, Royal Air Force.

In addition there were small specialist details and the customary large number of supply and transport units. (See Appendix IV.)

There was little indication as to the probable attitude of the Wana Wazirs, but one very satisfactory feature of the situation was to be found in the fact that the Mahsuds, as a whole, had largely given up their defiant attitude. So there existed very little prospect of assistance being forthcoming for the Wazirs from that quarter. On the contrary, it was believed that the majority of the Mahsuds would view with no hostile eye the passage of British and Indian troops through their country. The temporary reconciliation between Wazirs and Mahsuds during 1919 had vanished ; perhaps the Mahsuds had imagined themselves to have been left in the lurch by the Wazirs.

**The terms offered to the Wana Wazirs not complied with.**

—The first step was now to summon the Wana Wazir *maliks* to a *jirga* at Murtaza, this ceremony being fixed for 10th October. At this meeting the Wazirs were presented with the terms now imposed upon their tribe by the Government. These terms were briefly :—

- (i) A fine of Rs.40,000.
- (ii) Surrender of 250 tribal rifles, and also
- (iii) Of all Government rifles taken by them since 1st May, 1920.

In addition the Wazirs were required to produce Rs.20,000, 300 Government rifles and 200 tribal rifles as an earnest of good behaviour at a fully representative *jirga* to be held at Murtaza by 10th November. The Wazirs were thus

given ample time to comply with the terms. In default of compliance the Column would be ordered to march on Wana without any further delay. The tribe was warned that punitive measures would be adopted, if necessary, to enforce the required payment and surrender in full. As the Wazir *jirga* failed to meet by the date prescribed, and as the terms remained utterly unobserved, on 11th November a systematic aerial bombardment of certain objectives situated in the Wazir country was ordered to begin. The Wazirs were at that time divided on the issue of peace or war, the bellicose party which was the rather more influential being swayed by Haji Abdur Raziq. Bombing activity was consequently concentrated on localities known to be frequented by the Haji.

**The Column moves to Sarwekai.**—On 12th November the Wana Column left Jandola for Sarwekai by the road leading through the Shahur Tangi. Permanent piquets were posted to defend this forbidding defile, but not a shot was fired at the passing troops; the Mahsuds not only refrained from opposition, but rather showed a disposition to assist. Sarwekai was reached on the 18th, when it was found that a friendly *lashkar* of Mahsuds had actually occupied the old fort, after warning the Wazirs that they would not be permitted to fight on Mahsud ground. The Haji with his following had thereupon withdrawn.

**Further advance to Wana.**—A lengthy pause was made at Sarwekai in order to give the Wazirs another chance of complying with the ultimatum of 10th October. It was hoped that the pacific elements amongst them might benefit by the delay and so gain the upper hand. Certain sections of the Wazirs did, in fact, make overtures for a peaceful settlement, and by 15th December there had been received from them Rs.24,400, 51 Government and 87 tribal rifles. This, however, was considered an utterly

inadequate total of rifles, and so the troops were set in motion. Two battalions were left at Sarwekai to garrison the fort, and the Column resumed its advance to Wana on 16th December. With the exception of the manoeuvre employed to cross the high ground between the posts of Dargai Oba and Karab Kot, nothing worthy of note occurred during the advance. On that occasion, 18th December, the enemy, reported to be 700 strong, were seen making *sangars* in the area Nagundi-Granai Mara Narai. From the Tarkhike Algad (torrent) two alternative roads lead to Wana, one by Granai Mara Narai, the other by Kut Narai. On that day no piquets were allowed to proceed beyond the torrent, so as not to betray the selected line of advance. Next morning one battalion, 4/3rd Gurkhas, with one battery and one section of machine guns marched before dawn, so as to be in possession of the high ground beyond the ravine and on both sides of Granai Mara Narai by 07.15 hrs. Then with the rising sun on their backs and in the dim morning light the troops pushed on rapidly. The enemy was surprised, and before 10.30 hrs. the high ground was safely held. The rapidity of movement and determination exhibited by the 4/3rd Gurkhas had been admirable. The Column eventually reached Karab Kot at a cost of only 4 casualties. Wana was reached on 22nd December virtually without further opposition. The entire operation stood out in sharp contrast to the slow progress and stubborn resistance encountered by the Derajat Column on its way to Sora Rogha. The battle casualties of the Wana Column from November, 1920, until the end of March, 1921, were about 100; of these a number occurred during the three months that followed the occupation of Wana.

After the latter event the Line of Communication from Jandola to Wana became the scene of much sniping.

No. 1 section of the Line of Communication defences, extending from Jandola to a point beyond Dargai Oba, ran partly through Mahsud territory. Here several roving gangs of Abdullai and Abdur Rahman Khel Mahsuds made some vicious but determined attacks against the piquets. No. 2 section of Line of Communication defences, extending from the point west of Dargai Oba to Wana itself, lay entirely within Wana Wazir country. Here long-range sniping became prevalent. In the month of March one or two fierce attacks were made on convoys in either section.

**Attitude of the Wana Wazirs after that occupation.**—Much the same difficulty was to be experienced at Wana as had been encountered at Kaniguram. After the arrival of the troops payment of the fine and surrender of rifles proceeded all too slowly. The destruction of towers and of principal houses belonging to those sections known to be hostile was then taken in hand. But such measures did not appear to accelerate the rate of payment of the fine or of surrender of rifles. It became obvious that the majority of the inhabitants of the Wana plain had already paid or surrendered more than their full share of the fine and of the rifles in hopes of saving their own property. By the middle of January nothing more could be expected of them. The difficulty lay in compelling the recalcitrant sections to comply with the demands of Government. The exaction of the penalties could only be attained either by the invasion of recalcitrant territory, or by devastation, or by the application of force. Yet in the nature of things such a purpose could only be realised up to a certain point. Moreover, the majority of the more distant tribal sections, inhabiting districts bordering on Afghanistan, are virtually nomads owning no landed property, no dwellings, nor crops. They wander among the mountains of Waziristan and can take refuge across the Afghan border if hard

pressed. The problem of bringing these people to submission seemed insoluble. By the 31st March, 1921, there had been paid or surrendered : Rs.40,831 ; tribal rifles, 195 ; Government rifles, 133.

The situation now resembled that which had arisen in the Mahsud country at Kaniguram. It had come to a virtual *impasse*. So it was decided that troops should remain permanently in occupation of Wana, just as was being done at Ladha in the case of the Mahsuds. As the weather was growing hot, a redistribution of troops was carried out, while the British units were withdrawn for climatic reasons. A garrison of Indian troops, consisting of :—

- 1½ pack batteries,
- 1 field coy. sappers and miners,
- 1 battalion pioneers,
- 6 battalions Indian infantry,
- ½ coy. Machine Gun Corps,

with a few details, remained in Wana, where it was left for the space of some two years. The combined occupation of Ladha and Wana proved no light burden on the troops, as may be judged by the expressions employed by the Commander-in-Chief in India in his despatch, dated 23rd October, 1921 : “ The occupation of such a country as Waziristan is a severe strain on the troops who have to face arduous and dangerous duties daily. The scorching heat of summer, followed by a bitter winter, demands a very high standard of endurance from all troops employed in protective duties, whether on permanent piquets or on road protection.” After the completion of the Jandola-Tochi motor road, and since the Razmak operations of 1923, another policy has been adopted with regard to Waziristan. Wana was abandoned by regular troops and has not been reoccupied, except by irregulars.





*Royal Air Force Official. Copy is Copyrighted.*

THE RAZMAK COUNTRY THE PEAK OF PIR GHAI IN THE BACKGROUND NOTE THE HICQUITS  
PROTECTING THE ROAD

*Face 2a e 177*

## CHAPTER XIV

RAZMAK, 1923

**The contrast between campaigns of 1919-20 and 1922-23.**—In view of their proximity to failure in 1919, it would be doing an injustice to the Indian troops employed in Waziristan to pass over in silence the punitive operations carried out in those regions during the winter of 1922-23. The disheartening prologue to the Mahsud campaign which had been staged round Palosina in December, 1919, had, it is true, been followed by the more satisfactory fighting of 1920. Nevertheless, the taint of those original shortcomings had not altogether been effaced. Neither had the rather unconvincing conclusion to the expedition of 1920 quite sufficed to dispel all recollection of its more inauspicious inception. It needed the encouragement, the tangible proof of better things, to efface those impressions of 1919. So the Razmak operations of 1923 came as a heartening epilogue to the drama of 1920 in Waziristan. It proved conclusively how far the weaknesses that had been revealed little more than three years earlier were no more than symptoms of a passing malady.

**The plan of operations.**—The Razmak operations, moreover, were of great intrinsic interest, for during this brief campaign there came to light many lessons of a more convincing nature than in 1920, regarding the conduct of an Indian frontier campaign under modern conditions. To begin with, the motor road leading up the Tank Zam Valley from Tank via Razmak into the Tochi Valley and



so on to Bannu was actually completed and used during these operations. This fact alone altered the character of the campaign. Secondly, the Royal Air Force was represented by two entire squadrons of appropriate machines working from Dardoni aerodrome, from which adequate communication had been established to the fighting troops. Thirdly, the artillery allotted to the mobile force comprised one section of 6-inch howitzers and never less than 30 pack batteries.\* Last but not least, the infantry of the brigades employed round Razmak had attained a very different degree of training and of self-confidence to that of 1919. The combination of these circumstances was conducive to a totally different result. The insurgent Mahsud tribesmen were given no respite. The devastation of their villages was systematic, while their losses in action mounted apace and grew out of all proportion to the casualties which they were normally able to inflict upon the regular troops. The entire campaign came to them in the shape of a very disagreeable surprise. Their resistance, consequently, was never very prolonged, and their *lashkars* never assumed serious dimensions. The actual course of the operations was briefly the following.

**The advance of the two columns.**—With the impending completion of the Tank Zam Valley motor road in 1922 a redistribution of the forces in Mahsud country was decided upon. Ladha was to be abandoned, and Razmak, lying just outside Mahsud territory, was to be garrisoned in its stead. This fact gave rise to rumours among the Mahsuds that the troops were to be withdrawn altogether from Waziristan. Considerable unrest followed, until the tribesmen at length broke out into acts of hostility. This attitude brought about a suspension of work on the new

\* The new designation of the "mountain" batteries of 1919-20.

motor road above Dwa Toi on 1st December. The consequent but unfortunate inaction—inevitable it should be noted—of both troops and aeroplanes emboldened the Mahsuds. Not till 17th December could two squadrons of the Royal Air Force undertake the systematic bombardment of the insurgent sections of the tribe, while the completion of the motor road from the Tochi Valley to Razmak was being pushed on under the protection of the Razmak Force. Early in January the situation grew worse. It was, therefore, decided to undertake drastic punitive operations in the Makin area; these were to be carried out by the 9th Brigade of the Waziristan Force from Ladha, supported by the 7th Brigade of the Razmak Force from Razmak itself. The junction of the two columns was to be effected near Makin.

The first phase of the operations consisted in the completion of the motor road and the fortification of Razmak. The Razmak Force (consisting principally of 5th and 7th Brigades, with four pack batteries) advanced from the Tochi Valley, beginning that movement from Idak on 15th December. On 23rd January Razmak was reached by the 7th Brigade. The troops continued their advance until they met the 9th Brigade, which had come up from Ladha, at Tauda China on 4th February. The 7th Brigade, and indeed the whole Razmak Force, had encountered little serious fighting, but the natural difficulties in the way of the troops were considerable, while the completion of the road, at that period of the year, proved a truly arduous task. Raiding parties of Wazirs and Mahsuds were continually being sighted and driven off. That this result should have been attained at the cost of very few casualties is a sufficient proof of the high standard of training attained by the troops since 1920.

**Devastation of the Makin area.**—On 6th February the

devastation of the Makin area was taken in hand, although a heavy snowfall impeded the operation. Aeroplanes, 6-inch howitzers and 3·7-inch pack howitzers were regularly employed and contributed to the thoroughness of the destruction. By the 12th the operations were suspended and, on 22nd February, the obdurate Abdullai section of the Mahsuds made their submission at a ceremonial *jirga*. The total casualties of the Makin Column had amounted to only 137. On 12th March the 7th Brigade returned to Razmak and the Makin Column was thereupon dissolved. On the same day another *jirga* assembled at Tauda China, representing all sections of the Mahsuds. The Government policy was then explained to the whole tribe. Another *jirga* met on 23rd March, and the entire Mahsud assembly accepted the terms without dissent.

**Comments.**—There are but two lessons from the operations which it is proposed to emphasize in this summary.\* The first is the contrast that may be observed between the course of events in 1919-20 and in 1922-23. The climatic conditions were, if anything, more trying in 1923, and the first movements of the Razmak Force involved some difficult road-making. Yet the advance of the troops was comparatively rapid, their casualties very slight, while the enemy's active resistance lasted barely two months. In the second place the campaign demonstrates the inherent difficulty of dealing satisfactorily with the Waziristan problem. In 1922 the Mahsuds seemed as peacefully disposed as ever they had been. It needed but the rumours of the evacuation of their country by the regular garrison to arouse the dormant hostility of the irreconcilable

\* For a full account of the Razmak operations see the despatch of the Commander-in-Chief in India, published as Supplement to the "London Gazette" for 26th February, 1924.

elements. Rapidly these gained the upper hand until the greater part of the tribe was in arms. Not so with the Tochi or Wana Wazirs. But the Mahsud is of a different mentality. So the course of events proved abundantly that the control of Waziristan remains entirely synonymous with the control of the Mahsuds.

## CHAPTER XV

### MODERN ARTILLERY AND MILITARY ARMAMENT IN FRONTIER WARFARE

**The scope of artillery in modern mountain warfare.**—In view of the amazing development that took place in the various artillery services during the Great War, it is not without interest to examine how far some proportionate progress was registered in the use of mountain artillery in Waziristan and also what further improvements seem possible in this direction.

It must be clearly understood that there existed, under the conditions prevalent during the campaign, little scope for any employment of artillery, except on a very modest scale. In the first place, the very question of transport in a roadless, mountainous, country precluded the allotment of any but a few guns of small calibre to the expedition. Even after the inauspicious beginning of the campaign, the allotment of further artillery to the Force was finally abandoned largely on these grounds. For the same reason any truly lavish expenditure of ammunition remained out of the question. In these respects there was not much difference between the expedition of 1919 and previous campaigns. This state of affairs, moreover, can scarcely be altered so long as roads and transport are limited in the same degree as has been the case in the past. Nevertheless, there are now on foot many plans for the construction of roads and light railways on the North-Western Frontier that will allow of far easier movement of guns and transport

of ammunition. Mechanical transport, not to mention the consequent opportunity of employing a proportion of heavier wheeled artillery, may radically alter the whole problem. In fact, a section of 6-inch howitzers was employed in Waziristan in 1923.

But the modes of fighting, as well as the mobility and the lack of cohesion that are inherent in the tribal *lashkars*, are likely to remain. It would thus be idle to base any high hopes on results that might be expected from the support of a numerous artillery in future punitive campaigns. In 1923 the guns were largely employed for purposes of destruction of buildings. There would be little purpose in employing a mass of artillery to deal with small roving bands of hostile snipers. If the tribesmen should have recourse to larger and denser formation, then the case may alter. Such was, to a certain extent, the state of affairs at the opening of the campaign against the Mahsuds in December, 1919, when the artillery of the Striking Force was able to obtain targets such as have not often been encountered in frontier warfare. This, however, may be regarded as a somewhat limited contingency, even in the future. It may, however, be found possible to endow a punitive expedition with a far greater number and variety of artillery which would be employed according to the nature of the roads and of the hostile resistance first encountered. The unnecessary and heavier pieces of ordnance would then be discarded or employed according to the progress of the campaign.

**The mountain gun and howitzer compared.**—Although the proportion of artillery allotted to the Striking Force in 1919 was not much greater than was usual in former mountain expeditions, it differed from the earlier armament employed on such occasions in one very important respect. For many years mountain artillerymen had been

insisting upon the need for introducing a howitzer for use with mountain batteries. By 1919 this desire had been fulfilled, so that No. 6 (British) Mountain Battery took the field with an armament of 4 really modern 3·7-inch Q.F. howitzers. In addition, No. 27 (Indian) Mountain Battery was equipped with a "converted" 2·75-inch B.L. gun. The last-named piece was not altogether new nor satisfactory, and may, before many years, give way to a more modern weapon ; nevertheless, being mounted on a long recoil carriage and fitted with shields, it was far superior to anything hitherto employed in frontier fighting.

The principal characteristics of the two pieces are these :—

	2·75-inch B.L. Gun.	3·7-inch Q.F. Howitzer.
Weight of shell .	12½ lb.	20 lb.
Nature of shell .	Shrapnel and high explosive.	High explosive.
Maximum range .	8000 yards (H.E. only).	5900 yards.

The gun was provided with full and half charges of propellant, the latter enabling curved fire to be employed at medium ranges in order to search *nalas*, dead ground, etc.

The howitzer did not fire shrapnel shell and, although the introduction of an extremely sensitive fuze had endowed the H.E. shell with a bursting effect of greater radius and greater destructive power, the lack of shrapnel is felt by many artillerymen to detract from the value of the weapon.\* But the howitzer, none the less, proved a great success, because :—

- (i) The extra power conferred by the heavier projectile made it possible to clear thick scrub impervious to shrapnel or other cover too re-

\* Shrapnel shell for howitzers are now being made. .

sistant to be penetrated by the smaller H.E. shell of the B.L. gun.

- (ii) Possessing an all-round field of fire, due to its curved trajectory, it could come into action from any point on the line of march.
- (iii) It enabled dead ground and deep *nalas* to be searched that could not be reached by the gun.

The value of the effects obtained with the howitzer may be gauged from its appellation by the Mahsuds of "the gun with the eyes," since they utterly failed to grasp how ground, invisible to any hostile observer, could be searched by the somewhat deadly and very noisy shell of the howitzer. The real objection to the howitzer seems to reside in the number of mules that are required to carry it in pack—eight instead of five.

On the other hand, the gun still possesses a forward effect with its shrapnel that proved most advantageous in enfilading fire, so that the guns of the Derajat Column were often used from the flank, while the howitzer showed itself particularly suited for firing over the heads of advancing infantry.

**The combination of guns and howitzers.**—The artillery of the Striking Force comprised 4 howitzers and 6 guns. As the result of experience these pieces were normally grouped as follows: 1 section of guns marched with the advanced guard, while the remaining 8 pieces were divided into two groups of 2 guns and 2 howitzers each. This distribution proved thoroughly serviceable. The guns allotted to the advanced guard were found of incalculable service in assisting the leading infantry to overcome any sudden opposition. For instance, in the action at Asa Khan on 11th January, it is not too much to assert that they extricated the leading troops from a serious predicament



(see page 128). The two remaining groups marched with the main body, when the guns were normally employed to engage fleeting targets, while the howitzers were turned on to *sangars*, *nalas* and other cover. Then, as the enemy were driven to abandon their cover by howitzer fire, the guns would attempt to catch them with shrapnel fire in the open. The combination of gun and howitzer was also found useful for ranging purposes. Against targets along the knife-edge crests common in Waziristan, or in analogous situations, the howitzer was at a disadvantage, since the burst of its H.E. shell could not be observed. On such occasions the gun might be employed in finding the range with "air bursts" of shrapnel for the howitzer. The ideal co-operation of gun and howitzer was well illustrated in the action up the Baddar Toi Valley on 3rd March (see page 163). On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the complication introduced into the supply of ammunition by the joint presence of the two weapons is appreciable. A solution of the difficulty that is most favoured by artillerymen would lie in the production of a single weapon embodying the merits of gun and howitzer.\*

**The value of artillery as great as ever.**—The value of artillery in frontier warfare was shown by the Waziristan operations to be as great as ever. As to lethal effect the new weapon, the howitzer, was proved to be eminently successful. The respect with which the tribesmen have always regarded guns has become greater. In the early

\* The howitzer is at present the nearest approach to the ideal mountain weapon. When firing shrapnel shell with a full charge it becomes no mean substitute for the gun, although its maximum range is somewhat less. A reliable clockwork fuze would render air-ranging feasible. The steeper cone of the howitzer shrapnel is said to render a howitzer of questionable value in close support of infantry, but in frontier warfare this objection is of much lesser weight. Successful experiments have been made with short-shaft draught with regard to its transport.

fighting round Palosina Camp the howitzer and the gun together were not only responsible for assisting the infantry out of nasty situations, but also inflicted casualties on the Mahsuds that fortunately prevented the tribesmen from claiming a real success over the Striking Force. In the action on Tarakai Hill the heavy casualties that were occasioned by the artillery among the Mahsuds on the crest of the hill were probably the cause of their growing disinclination to face shell fire during the later stages of the campaign. In this connection it should be remembered that in this earlier period (December, 1919) artillery found better targets and also fired more rounds than would have been the case later in the campaign. From France had been imported the original idea of barrage fire, and the consequent more lavish use of ammunition. Although, owing to the small number of guns and lesser amount of ammunition available, methods of fire based on such a free expenditure could only be employed to a comparatively limited extent, its principles were observed and served their purpose. Here again any further expansion of such liberal artillery support will be found to be limited by the capacity of the transport.

The campaign showed that the gun could not be replaced on the frontier by machine guns or Lewis guns. The moral support which artillery offers to infantry is still exceedingly great. The isolated infantrymen struggling uphill over bare, rocky, ground against all but invisible sharpshooters cannot altogether dispense with the encouragement of the sound of the shell flying overhead. On the other hand, it is clear that Lewis guns can be used in conjunction with artillery to the greatest advantage, mainly to stop short-range sniping and sudden rushes of swordsmen. This is more especially the case in a withdrawal, where the guns may find it difficult to cease fire if this operation be left

to be carried out at all late. The presence of a pair of Lewis guns may effectively solve the difficulty.

Aeroplanes were used in combination with guns, but only with slender success, except for the registration of destructive deliberate fire on stationary targets. Fleeting targets were found to be better dealt with by means of the airmen's machine guns.

**Special opportunities for using artillery.**—So long as frontier tribes possess no artillery there are many opportunities for using guns and howitzers which would seldom or never occur in European warfare. Artillery can, for instance, be freely employed at such close ranges as would never be considered practicable under other conditions. This principle influences the whole employment of guns in such campaigns. During the Waziristan fighting artillery was employed on special tasks, such as these :—

- (i) *For the protection of camps.* Sniping could be kept down and outlying piquets were supported by gunfire, and often most profitably by howitzer fire, from camp itself. In such a case a pre-arranged code of signals was employed by which the piquets could call for immediate assistance.
- (ii) *The destruction of villages and frontier towers.* Howitzers were frequently employed for this purpose with excellent effect in the vicinity of Makin. The operation could be carried out with the utmost deliberation and with surprisingly good results.
- (iii) *For the defence of fixed posts.* Guns can form valuable means of defending isolated posts. An entire battery, No. 35 (Indian), was thus allotted to the defence of L. of C. posts in the lower Tank Zam Valley.

It may be possible to assert that the employment of artillery in frontier warfare further differs from its possible uses in European warfare in two important respects. In the first place the relative value of both artillery and machine gun is infinitely greater on the frontier than it would be in Europe. It is, therefore, possible to employ artillery on the frontier on a different scale. Thus on the frontier the Lewis gun can play the part of the machine gun of the European campaign ; the machine gun becomes a species of divisional field artillery, while the mountain (or pack) battery may be regarded as equivalent to any weapon heavier than the field gun. Secondly, the need for economy of ammunition is most pressing. Every effort should, therefore, be made to select, before the beginning of any operation, the actual points from which artillery support may be forthcoming. By thus making a correct forecast of the probable action of the guns, it may be found practicable to render the infantry more independent of promiscuous artillery fire whenever opposition might be encountered. This reasoned co-operation of guns with infantry will also be greatly facilitated by a preliminary aerial photographic survey of the ground.

**6-inch howitzers brought to Ladha.**—In conclusion, attention might be drawn to the employment, during the campaign of 1923, of a section of 6-inch howitzers in the Razmak operations. These weapons firing a 100-lb. shell at a maximum range of over 9000 yards evoked the utmost consternation among the Mahsuds in the Makin area. It is probable that, where facilities exist for the transport of such pieces and of their ammunition, the future may witness a further use of heavy howitzers on the frontier, since their employment makes it possible to keep many square miles of country and many native villages under

constant threat of bombardment in the event of any misbehaviour of the inhabitants.

**Other modern armament employed in Waziristan.**—In other respects the Waziristan operations of 1919-20 did not illustrate the possible employment of very many new warlike inventions, or of other modern weapons.

Barbed wire was employed, of course, on a very large scale for the strengthening of fortified posts, piquets and the like.

Machine guns were not employed until the Wana expedition in the autumn of 1920. There was no occasion to test their use.

Lewis guns were issued to all battalions on proceeding into Waziristan. Owing to the circumstances named in Chapter VIII, these guns cannot be said to have been very highly or properly tried during the critical part of the campaign.

Neither tanks nor gas were employed. A few armoured cars were in use on the roads in the plains.

Radio-telegraphy found only a rather limited scope and the apparatus was not altogether satisfactory, except for work between permanent stations.

Stokes' mortars were issued to a few fixed posts. An experimental and unofficial pattern of cavalry equipment for these mortars, carrying 48 rounds, was also employed by the mounted troops on the Lines of Communication in the plains.

Since 1920 considerable progress has been made in applying modern military equipment to frontier warfare, so that these earlier operations cannot be accepted as offering a true illustration of a frontier campaign carried out by forces completely supplied with all modern adjuncts of war, adapted or modified for mountain warfare.

## CHAPTER XVI

### AIRCRAFT IN FRONTIER WARFARE

**Conditions governing the use of aircraft in mountain warfare.**—Although aeroplanes had already been engaged in military operations on the frontier of India, their first employment on a large scale and over any length of time was reserved for the Waziristan Campaign of 1919–20. At the same time, it cannot be claimed that the experience of these latter operations with regard to aircraft could be considered as being in any degree final or conclusive. Neither is it possible within the compass of a few pages to dispose, even incompletely, of this entire subject, which is replete with difficulties both technical and otherwise. The following remarks can, therefore, only be regarded as the briefest summary of a very wide but wholly new subject, which is already assuming an immense importance.

It can be accepted as axiomatic that the successful employment of aeroplanes in frontier warfare demands the fulfilment of three conditions :—

- (i) The machines must be handy and of high performance, possessing a considerable ceiling\* with a good reserve of power.
- (ii) The aerial squadrons must be in possession of a generous reserve of machines and of all spares, probably about 100 per cent of establishment.

\* Ceiling is the technical term denoting the maximum altitude to which aircraft will normally ascend.

- (iii) The military forces must have a clear perception of what the airmen can or cannot achieve under all vicissitudes of active service.

These conditions were only realised after the close of the campaign of 1919-20, and it is, consequently, to the Razmak operations of 1923 that the student should turn for a more complete understanding of the value of aircraft in frontier warfare. But even in 1923 full use could not be made of the available squadrons of the Royal Air Force. Only 2 squadrons, 27th and 28th, were equipped with aeroplanes suitable for this task. Four more squadrons only received their establishment of machines after the close of the operations. Had these 6 squadrons been able to participate in the campaign, the lessons to be learnt therefrom would have been more truly complete.

**Difficulties in the way of employment of aircraft.**—But it is worth while going back a few years. In the Waziristan campaign of 1917 a few B.E. 2C. aeroplanes, working from Tank, had co-operated with the troops. These machines proved of value, but, owing to the high temperatures then prevailing, their assistance could not always be reckoned upon. The aeroplanes were, in fact, of insufficient power to cope with the air conditions produced by the summer temperature; their ceiling was inadequate; lastly, there was a complete deficiency of reserve machines, if not of spare parts. The airmen were as active as circumstances permitted. They were principally employed on preliminary reconnaissances, carried out by one or two machines which would fly back to summon others from Tank, should it be observed that the Force was being opposed. In addition, raids were carried out on several parts of the country lying outside the radius of the fighting. Kani-guram was bombed and, on another occasion, a number of

direct hits were obtained on Makin and Marobi. But the campaign was very short, air conditions were none too favourable, and the number of machines remained far too small for the experience then gained to be anything but totally incomplete.

During the Third Afghan War of 1919 aircraft again rendered assistance. Kabul was bombed by the single available Handley-Page machine on 24th May. The latter incident was a fine performance and, it is said, accelerated the Amir's request for peace. But none of the remaining aeroplanes were really up to the standard required; they were still B.E. 2C.'s, some of which could scarcely rise above the mountain crests. Nevertheless, the co-operation of the old B.E. machines with the cavalry and artillery proved noteworthy. The remaining squadrons, 20th and 99th, among others, arrived in India too late to take part in the fighting. But the campaign proved all too short to provide sufficient knowledge concerning the use of aircraft on the frontier.

In the case of the Waziristan operations of 1919-20, circumstances proved different. The weather was much cooler, while there was ample time and scope for the aerial force to attempt every variety of duty. On the other hand, there were not enough machines of the best type (Bristol Fighters) available in order to meet all contingencies that could arise in the course of a frontier campaign. The supply of spares proved once more inadequate, while the co-operation of aircraft and troops was not yet reduced to a commonly accepted or understood system. This failure, however, may perhaps be ascribed largely to the inexperience of the troops.

There exist, of course, special difficulties in the way of the employment of aeroplanes in mountainous country such as Waziristan. In summer-time high temperatures



may render flying very much more hazardous owing to the bad air conditions extending up to some thousands of feet from the surface of the ground. There also have to be taken into account other risks and disadvantages that may be encountered when flying is carried out in mountainous country or in narrow valleys. Chief among these is the absence of good landing grounds. In practice, if the engines of the machines are in really good order, there may be no call to make any emergency landing. But from a tactical standpoint advanced landing grounds are of great benefit, since they will naturally permit of aeroplanes being applied to a critical situation with the minimum of delay. For this reason Sora Rogha Camp proved most valuable to the Derajat Column early in 1920; it permitted the landing of aeroplanes even though the aerodrome was difficult and cramped.

In other respects also the aeroplane may find its activities more circumscribed in any frontier campaign of this nature, than would be the case in a war of European scale. Once an expedition is launched, there remains little scope for any strategic employment of aircraft other than distant bombing raids. Then the forces are small; the movement of the troops becomes slow and often laborious; their radius of action is always more limited, so that the capacity of the aeroplane for covering distance becomes, in many ways, of lesser account.

In visual reconnaissance work also the sphere of utility of aircraft is relatively less against irregular combatants than it would be in Europe. The location and observation of the progress of friendly troops finds practically no place in their employment. The enemy's forces, moreover, are numerically insignificant; they adopt no very definite formation; they are composed of individual combatants who are, one and all, experts in taking cover both from

sight and against bullets, and, consequently, are never exceedingly visible. In Waziristan, even though the first two stages of the advance led across very barren ground, this was always strewn with boulders and stones which at times rendered satisfactory observation and location of either combatant exceedingly difficult. The latter part of the campaign lay through country that supported some growth of low trees, bushes or scrub and therefore afforded some cover from sight, so that the discovery of the Mahsuds was often a lengthy matter. Such conditions tend to narrow down the use of aircraft to certain well-defined tasks, but no implication is contained in this statement that their employment is not productive of most valuable results.

**Absence of anti-aircraft defence.**—On the other hand, there is no hostile anti-aircraft defence of any sort in existence. Nevertheless, low-flying aeroplanes are by no means immune from risk, for the tribesman is no mean shot with the rifle. It may be said, in fact, that the Pathan will make good shooting against aeroplanes flying as high as 2500 feet above his head. Indeed, not less than three machines were shot down by Mahsud rifle fire on 14th January during the fighting above Ahnai Tangi. Bullet holes were constantly found in the planes of machines returning from low-flying operations.

In spite of these characteristics of the campaign of 1919, and in spite of the ignorance prevailing as to the best manner of employing aeroplanes, it may be stated with perfect confidence that aircraft rendered excellent service to the Waziristan Force especially in December, 1919, and in January, 1920. In particular, they contributed towards the more fortunate issue to the fighting round Palosina than at one moment seemed probable. There is every reason to believe that the utility of aircraft will increase

enormously in any future operations of the same nature provided that the squadrons are sufficiently numerous and supplied with suitable machines and with sufficient spares.

**The various tasks allotted to aircraft in Waziristan.**—The tasks which the aeroplanes were called upon to fulfil in Waziristan were the following :—

- (i) Offensive duties . (a) distant bombing raids.  
(b) co-operation with troops by bombing and machine-gun fire.
- (ii) Reconnaissance . (a) visual.  
(b) photographic.
- (iii) Miscellaneous . (a) demonstration.  
(b) pamphleteering.  
(c) conveyance of passengers, stores, etc.

To consider these in detail :—

**Bombing raids.**—The easy success achieved by the bombing of the Madda Khel Wazirs near the Tochi Valley on 18th November may have led to an over-estimation of the results likely to accrue from similar attacks against the Mahsuds. It should be remembered that the bombing of the Madda Khel was carried out under conditions unusually favourable for the success of such an operation, since :—

- (a) Surprise was complete.
- (b) The number of aeroplanes employed was both adequate for the task and morally impressive.
- (c) The localities then bombed offered perfect targets.

The question of surprise in bombing attacks must constitute the most important consideration ; it is at the same time a matter of considerable difference of opinion. It has usually

been the custom on the frontier to give warning of any impending aerial attack of this nature, to enable the tribesmen to put their families in a place of safety. By such action the element of surprise is lost. This, however, is an ethical and political question which cannot be discussed in the present study. The fact remains that the Mahsud was given every occasion to foresee aerial attack, and that surprise was therefore not always obtained. The number of machines available in 1919 was, moreover, inadequate to carry out any "intensive" attack over so great an area as the entire Mahsud country.

**Their utility.**—The actual course of events was the following. After the rejection of the Government terms by the Mahsud *maliks* on 11th November a series of aerial attacks was initiated over the whole country. This, however, included only one night raid. To ensure the bombardment being carried out systematically, the country was divided into three areas, each of which was subjected to attack by one of the three available squadrons. In 1919 these bombing squadrons normally used to go out in force, but in the Razmak operations of 1923 it was further arranged that one machine should be flying over each area throughout the day. Soon after the beginning of the attacks in November, 1919, the inhabitants showed that they were considerably harassed by the bombardment and took to their cave dwellings, which abound in the vicinity of almost every village in Waziristan. It is in these retreats that the tribesmen spend the cold season for the sake of greater warmth. For this reason the bombardment soon began to prove of little effect. The attention of the aircraft, therefore, was regularly diverted from villages to herds of sheep and cattle, which were also subjected not only to bombing, but also to machine-gun fire. This led to the curious result that the herds were

divided up into small flocks in order to decrease the size of the targets, a fact which undoubtedly tended to immobilize many able-bodied men. In this respect the bombardment was successful. Towards the close of November the scale of the bombardment was increased, but it was soon ascertained that all larger villages which offered somewhat obvious targets were being regularly deserted. In the case of the smaller villages, it was observed that the inhabitants would return to their dwellings as soon as an attack was over. The size of these smaller communities did not render them very inviting objects of attack. Moreover, the efficacy of the bombing operation as a whole was very considerably hampered by the inaccuracy of the maps then available.

Although some material damage and casualties had been inflicted on the population of the villages, there is no doubt that this nature of attack, taken as a whole, was a failure. Long before the arrival of the Striking Force at Tank on 12th December, it had become clear that aerial attack alone would never bring the Mahsuds to submission, and that the tribesmen were still as defiant as ever. To a very great extent this failure was due to the insufficiency of the aeroplanes and to their consequent inability to *sustain* the bombardment. The success of the latter depends on how far it can bring about a total interruption of the daily life of the tribesmen. In addition the actual results obtained against the mud-built houses of the villages did not turn out to be as great as was anticipated. Kaniguram and Marobi were freely bombed, yet only the heaviest bombs could produce adequate results, since the explosion of smaller projectiles remained either ineffective or far too local. The 230-lb. bomb alone could be absolutely relied upon to wreck a Mahsud house, whereas the explosion of the 112-lb. bomb might

not even render it unsafe for habitation. On Kaniguram itself about 16 tons of bombs were dropped, but the official view is that this total weight of bombs was "out of all proportion to the material damage done." The net results of nearly a month's attack of the Mahsud country could, therefore, only be reckoned as being small. Moral effect was considerable, some casualties were caused, while a certain amount of damage to property was also realised. That was all. On the other hand, under other conditions where the attack could be relied upon to achieve surprise it might undoubtedly prove effective, especially when a demonstration can be made by a sufficiently large number of aircraft and, still more, if the attack can be initiated and carried out at night. It is largely a question of undermining the enemy's *morale*.

**Tactical co-operation with troops in action.**—The value of aeroplanes in support of infantry in action normally proved very great. But, owing to the small scale of the battles compared to those that took place in France, and in view of the relative invisibility of the tribesmen, it was sometimes difficult for the airmen to locate the combatants. Expectation was thus disappointed. Nevertheless, the presence alone of one aeroplane could prove of assistance to the infantry; it greatly encouraged the attacking troops, whilst completely immobilizing the tribesmen. The moral factor thus assumed considerable importance; so much so, that it was found advantageous for the airman to drop a few bombs during an action, even though he might not have a fair target in sight at all. The extent to which this moral effect could be attained was fully exemplified on one occasion, namely, on 14th January, during the fighting on "Flathead Left," when two aeroplanes, having exhausted their bombs and ammunition, would not leave the infantry

who were exposed to imminent Mahsud attack. They, accordingly, remained overhead and by means of repeated nose-dives succeeded in pinning the tribesmen to the ground, thus gaining time for the hard-pressed Gurkhas to recover themselves. So great was the moral value of this support that in the 1923 operations it became a standing duty of the airmen. It was, indeed, found far more advantageous that one single aeroplane should be continually flying above advancing troops than that there should be any greater number of machines flying intermittently overhead. It was, in fact, owing to the absence of a continuous aerial patrol overhead that some of the failures of 1919-20 may be ascribed. In 1923 a regular relief of single aeroplanes overlapping on patrol thus became the normal routine of the advance.

**Conditions affecting such use.**—In this kind of warfare it was not always found possible for the single airman to be sure of locating a target, and it often turned out to be a matter of luck that he should do so. Instances occurred in Waziristan when five, six or even seven machines might be flying above an engagement in full progress, yet it might happen that only one or two machines would distinguish the combatants, let alone the points where their assistance was most needed. Communication with the ground thus assumed particular importance. Radio-telephony was not practicable. Popham panels proved of no great value. The device was, therefore, employed of laying out a number of linen strips on the ground, so as to form an arrow visible from the aeroplane overhead. The arrow would indicate the direction in which lay the point of attack of the troops, whilst a system of bars across the tail of the arrow would signify the distance in advance of that spot where the hostile resistance might be expected or aerial assistance was in chief request. The same system was

developed so as to indicate by means of constantly varying symbols, constructed of these linen strips, the position of the troops on the ground. The plan was successful, and only once did the strips fall into possession of the Mahsuds and so procure their immunity from aerial attack. This matter of identifying the combatants on the ground is most important in frontier warfare. The bombing of friendly troops actually occurred on one or two occasions, fortunately without any serious results. It becomes extremely difficult at times for the airman to distinguish between the Indian infantry and the tribesmen in this broken terrain. It is impossible for him to differentiate between hostile and "friendly" tribesmen. The growing use of *Khasadars* and other local levies on the frontier invests this subject with great importance.

The need for rapid communication between the aeroplane and the ground is, therefore, most urgent. This fact calls for an early solution of the difficulties now standing in the way of radio-telephony. It was this necessity for easier communication with the ground that endowed Sora Rogha aerodrome, inadequate as it was, with great importance, since it enabled the airmen to keep in closer touch with the troops.

The aeroplane in 1919-20 was found to be a most valuable complement to the rifle, the gun and the howitzer. The airman was able to attack the enemy in positions whence he could not be dislodged by rifle fire, or behind cover where howitzer fire could not be observed. Thus, on 20th December, the easy occupation of Mandanna Hill was largely attributable to the attack by only one or two machines which employed their bombs and machine guns against the reverse slopes of "Comb Rocks." It must be admitted that on this occasion the element of chance favoured the discovery of the Mahsuds, for only one or



two aeroplanes alone out of a total of seven that were flying over the scene of the fighting were able to locate the enemy. Again, on a later occasion at Aka Khel, the aircraft were able to discover numerous bodies of Mahsuds moving in the valley after the successful night march of the Striking Force. By attacking all these groups with bombs, and by indicating their presence to the artillery, the airmen prevented the enemy from combining. Indeed, the Mahsuds were so much harassed that they not only made no attempt to recapture the lost ground, but eventually slunk away almost without firing a shot.

The capacity for low-flying on the part of the pilots is an important qualification for the use of aircraft in this type of warfare. For this reason machine guns or very small bombs were more frequently employed by the airmen, since these permitted of lower flying. The machine gun, in fact, proved far more effective than the bomb in many of the duties falling to the lot of the aeroplanes, and especially in attacking herds of cattle.

**Visual reconnaissance.**—For reasons already stated above, results obtained from visual reconnaissance were sometimes disappointing. This was largely due to the fact that such mountain operations are on a miniature scale, and that the surface of the country is very broken and rough. Ocular observation from the ground is thus often necessary to supplement observation from the aeroplane. The tactical value of such ground has to be estimated more closely than is possible from above.

**Photography.**—Where time allowed, photographic reconnoissances proved most valuable. Vertical photographs were the more usual, but these were supplemented by oblique views taken of the more important tactical features. During the Razmak operations oblique photographs were habitually taken for tactical purposes, whilst large numbers

of vertical photographs were used for more purely topographical work. Owing to the time necessary for the development of the negatives at a distant aerodrome, it was not feasible to obtain any photographs that might prove of service during an engagement. It is necessary to estimate the value of the ground and to order photographs to be taken well before the actual operation.

Deliberate photographic surveying of unknown or unmapped country opens a wide field of utility in future campaigns in uncivilized countries. In the case of the Razmak operations of 1923 the troops were able to begin the campaign with a complete photographic map of the entire district. In December, 1919, on the other hand, the airmen had failed to find their appointed targets during the first day's operations near Do Tak owing to faulty maps.

**Miscellaneous Tasks.**—Owing to the small number of guns employed with such expeditions and to the nature of the country, the use of aircraft for the purpose of artillery registration does not provide much scope, except in the case of deliberate fire at stationary and distant targets such as villages and towers. In any case, in mountainous country the artillery have not much difficulty in finding observation posts and so often dispense with aerial assistance.

Aeroplanes were freely employed in Waziristan for dropping notices and copies of the Government terms, but it should be remembered that probably only one in a hundred of the Pathan tribesmen is able to read.

Despatches and spare parts of guns, urgently needed in an emergency, were frequently brought up and dropped from aeroplanes.

Commanders and staff officers were taken up either for reconnaissance purposes or for rapid conveyance from one spot to another where landing facilities permitted.

It has also been suggested that "lighter than air"

craft, i.e. small airships with a lifting capacity of one or two tons, might be employed for transport purposes. In view of the absence of enemy anti-aircraft defences, the proposal appears attractive. The conveyance of 10 to 16 tons of supplies and stores daily from base to troops might altogether change the problem of frontier warfare. This aspect of aerial transport still awaits consideration.

But even as things were, it may be asserted that the Waziristan Campaign of 1919-20 has conclusively demonstrated the value of aircraft on the frontier. To develop possible uses of such an auxiliary arm, there must be a thorough comprehension on the part of both troops and airmen as to what aeroplanes can do in mountainous country, and, secondly, it is very necessary to develop the methods of communication between aircraft and the ground. The progress that was made in this respect between the operations of 1919-20 and those of 1923 round Razmak offers a convincing proof of these statements. In 1923 there were two entire squadrons, suitably equipped, operating from Dardoni aerodrome. Radio-telephony had been established between Column Headquarters and the squadrons. It was thus found possible to maintain uninterrupted communication in both directions. A clearer idea existed as to the correct province of the aeroplane in mountain warfare than had been the case before.

The closer the understanding between the squadrons and the troops, the better will be the results. The presence of an experienced *liaison* officer of the Royal Air Force at the Military Headquarters was already found to be of great advantage in 1919. He alone could explain the tactical difficulties and requirements of the aerial arm, choose landing-grounds and issue orders to the aeroplanes in language that was most rapidly communicated to or even understood by the pilots.

## CHAPTER XVII

### GENERAL LESSONS OF THE CAMPAIGN OF 1919-20

**The broader issues of the campaign.**—Apart from the more specialised issues that arise out of the use of aircraft and of modern artillery in frontier warfare, the campaign of 1919-20 in Waziristan can be regarded as offering but few lessons that are either really new or of a permanent character.\*

Once more its broader issues were to demonstrate quite clearly how in planning any frontier campaign two factors require considerable attention, since their disregard or miscalculation may deeply affect, if not stultify, all pre-conceived plans of operation :—

- (i) It is necessary to allow ample time in warfare of this kind to bring any operations to a successful and definite conclusion.
- (ii) It is never quite possible to forecast with certainty the probable line of action of Pathan tribesmen.

To a large extent these factors are closely related, and, in practice, may be taken as leading to the same result. It should not be forgotten, however, that unforeseen climatic and transport difficulties may impede an expedition even more than the action of the tribesmen. But since complications due to that cause did not arise in Waziristan, they will not be referred to further.

\* Students of this campaign would be well advised to consult Field Service Regulations, 1923, Part II, Chapter XIV. They will then realise how far the teachings of this campaign are of a really negative nature.

In 1919 the original plan of operations in Waziristan, regarded as a whole, had allowed for a rate of progress that would admit of an expedition being conducted against the Wana Wazirs before the beginning of the hot weather. The accepted time-table had necessarily and wisely allowed for two punitive marches being carried out in the Tochi Valley at the outset of the campaign; yet neither of these marches took place, since the submission of the Tochi Wazirs was unexpectedly rapid and complete. The campaign against the Mahsuds was, therefore, initiated in mid-December, and not in late January as had been contemplated. Yet in spite of this acceleration, a complete change of programme was occasioned by the protracted resistance offered by the Mahsuds in December and January. There had seemed no substantial reason for anticipating such a stubborn attitude on their part; it had been surmised, even in early December, that the Mahsuds might possibly accept the Government terms. Later, again, it was still thought possible that further resistance to the advance of the Derajat Column would not prove generally popular with the whole tribe. This turned out far from fact. Subsequently, after the column had reached Sora Rogha, hope was still entertained in high quarters that the contumacious attitude of the Mahsuds might come to an end and thus permit of the necessary operations being initiated against the Wana Wazirs during that same spring. Events defeated all these expectations. It had never been foreseen that the Derajat Column would remain encamped for two months within a stone's throw of Kaniguram without obtaining the formal submission of the Mahsuds. Yet the history of previous campaigns could illustrate the attitude of the tribesmen in analogous circumstances in the past. On the other hand, the resistance of the Wana Wazirs in the

late autumn of 1920 proved so slight as to be virtually negligible. But they, also, could not be brought to complete surrender. It is a sound maxim in dealing with frontier tribes: "You never can tell."

**The slowness of the opening stages.**—The progress of the Waziristan Force along the Tank Zam Valley during the first six weeks of the campaign proved slow beyond all expectation. The scheme of operations had rested on the basis of forward stages of 10 to 12 miles in length. At the end of each stage a pause was to be made, sufficient only for the concentration of ten days' stores and supplies, before venturing on the next forward stage. In three stages the expedition should thus have stood within range of Makin or Kaniguram. In practice, the first two stages measured 2 and 4 miles respectively, and three weeks elapsed before the column entered on the third stage of the advance. This poor rate of progress can be ascribed wholly to the difficulties that were occasioned by the inexperience of the troops when pitted against the unexpectedly fierce fighting spirit of the Mahsuds.

**The extraordinary aggressiveness of the Mahsuds.**—It is, indeed, this intensely aggressive temper evinced by the Mahsud tribesman, coupled with the greatly enhanced military skill which he displayed, that provides the principal lesson of the campaign. Since the days when the Sudanese dervishes had thrown themselves on the squares of infantry at Tamai and Abu Klea in 1884 and 1885, scarcely any British expedition had been called upon to face a series of ferocious attacks, such as were launched by the Mahsud swordsmen on the summit of Mandanna ridge, on Tarakai Hill or on "Flathead Left." But the Mahsuds were not blind fanatics like the dervishes; they were admirably supported by the fire of well-posted marksmen cunningly concealed behind bullet-proof cover.

Hence the formidable character of these onslaughts, for, even if the ground had permitted of such tactics, there was neither opportunity nor time for the defence to adopt a close formation while fire discipline was inadequate to meet the crisis. This action on the part of the Mahsuds, combined with their skill in the use of ground and of fire, seemed, at first sight, to have effected a revolution in frontier fighting. Yet in the end, the tribesman was shown to remain what he had been. Provided the invading troops are endowed with a sufficient degree of skill, confidence and mobility, it would be rash, indeed, to assume that even the Mahsud will desire to repeat such attacks as he made round Palosina. In 1919-20, it is true, he was not far from achieving success. The aeroplane, the howitzer, the gun and the grenade redressed the balance and then, slowly, the tables were turned. There came the surprises caused by the night march, and so the Waziristan Force learnt how to meet the enemy on more level terms. The Mahsuds' resistance thereupon collapsed; the tribesman reverted to type; finally, the advance of the Wana Column became a military promenade. During the Razmak operations of 1923 the greater skill and experience of the invading troops never afforded the Mahsuds an opening. Yet the repetition of this rapid deterioration might or might not recur; there still exists the risk of Afghan or outside aid: "You never can tell."

**The main lesson the necessity of a high degree of training.**—The incidents of the campaign of 1919-20, especially when compared with the operations of 1923, prove in the most unmistakable fashion the value, or rather the absolute necessity, of a very high standard of individual *training among all combatant troops employed in a mountain expedition*. The duration and scale of the Great War in Europe may have blinded many of those who

participated in its desperate struggles to the fact that a standard of training sufficient for the needs of the encounter of masses would never, for a single moment, withstand the strain of a frontier campaign. Neither did the tactical methods permissible in the great struggle in Flanders turn out appropriate to the nature of Indian mountain warfare. It is a truism that tactical methods and training should go hand in hand. Where large masses can be used, where artillery and high explosive predominate, certain tactical processes of a rather crude nature can be employed and the training of the individual can remain more elementary. The presence of numbers in itself may endow the timorous and the inexperienced with a sense of safety and of power, so that troops trained in a brief, intensive curriculum may under such conditions render a good account of themselves, especially where both combatants start on an equal basis. But on the Indian frontier the case is very different. In mountain warfare, as it still remains in spite of all progress achieved in modern military equipment, numbers will rarely be present, while the enemy is particularly expert in the use of ground and of the rifle. Those who attack such a formidable fighting man over terrain of his own choosing, must be able to compete with him individually on more or less level terms. Otherwise the handicap becomes too great. So it comes about that in operations of this nature the bludgeon methods applicable to mass fighting must yield to the finer art of individual combat. But even a high pitch of training adequate for warfare on the plain is hardly sufficient for *this class of fighting*. The soldier required for frontier warfare must be trained for the end in view. This fact *had already been proved in the Tirah campaign of 1897-98.*

**Indian troops virtually untrained in 1919.**—Now there is no disguising the truth that at the opening of the Waziristan



Campaign the efficiency of the troops in India had sunk to a lamentably low ebb. It would be wrong to attempt even to gloss over such a state of affairs. Officers of the Indian Army returning to that country in 1919, after an absence of five years, were aghast at the deterioration that had set in among the troops as the result of the Great War. This fact, however, is well known ; nor was it of the Indian Army's own seeking or making. It would be a little ungenerous to descant upon the matter any further, the more so because some of the units that so nearly broke down in December, 1919, were to be transformed by the schooling that they were to receive during the ensuing weeks. Nevertheless, in view of much that has been said and written as to the very short period in which it was found practicable to train the private soldier for the purposes of the Great War, it may not be amiss to emphasize the absolute necessity of a thorough grounding of the recruit in the elementary portions of the soldier's work if he is to be employed in frontier warfare. Without such individual training a battalion cannot be expected to play its part in an arduous campaign against redoubtable combatants, such as the Wazir or the Mahsud on their own ground, with any hope of success. Conditions are scarcely likely to change in the future. The development of any strategic perception, or of a more far-seeing or reasoned leading among the frontier tribes is perhaps improbable. On the other hand, should any such tendencies creep into their conduct of war, and should the tribesmen ever, by any chance, be supported by skilled advice, or find themselves in the possession of efficient artillery, numerous machine guns or stocks of grenades and analogous adjuncts of war, the prospect of entering on a campaign of this nature without highly trained troops is not alluring. In Waziristan it was also clearly demon-

strated, that in view of the deplorable effects of the loss of their British officers on Indian troops in action, the training of that Army requires especial attention.

**Self-confidence and musketry.**—Self-confidence and skill-at-arms are consequently the first essentials on which any sound method of training for frontier fighting must be based. The failures of the battalions of the Waziristan Force round Mandanna Kach might largely be attributed to the lack of these qualities. By the time the Derajat Column had passed the Ahnai Tangi, it was beginning to attain a very different status. The weaker elements had been weeded out; the individual soldier was acquiring self-confidence; the officer and non-commissioned officer had already gained experience. If, therefore, it be still permissible to refer to such rudimentary matters, it may be asserted that these operations point to the primary necessity of training the foot-soldier in the use of his own personal weapons, the rifle and the bayonet; perhaps also in the use of the grenade. Round Mandanna Kach the earlier engagements of the campaign all bore witness to glaring deficiencies, such as :—

- (i) Inability to use the rifle, to fire round or over cover, up or downhill. This resulted in the absence of that confidence which should be felt by the soldier in himself and in his ability to meet the tribesman with reasonable prospect of success.
- (ii) Ignorance as to the use of the bayonet.
- (iii) Faulty fire discipline conducive to waste of ammunition, wild firing and the like.
- (iv) Construction of inadequate or flimsy cover, or even inability to take cover at all.

**Fire discipline.**—In frontier warfare it has been proved

again and again that deliberate aimed fire must be the rule; moreover, that when fire is employed at all, it must be accurate. The Waziristan Campaign amply confirmed the lesson. Should the necessity arise for any volume of fire, or for covering a surprise movement, recourse must be had to the Lewis gun, for which purpose it now exists. These guns, however, require highly trained personnel and such men were unfortunately not forthcoming at the outbreak of the campaign of 1919. In fact, the guns were so badly handled that they were withdrawn from the companies (see page 111). In addition, trained observation of fire was hopelessly deficient, whereas events showed it to be essential to any progress. To this end picked observers should be trained and employed to ensure that the whereabouts of the hostile sharpshooters do not escape attention. The sum total of these remarks points to the fact that effective musketry and, still more, a strong sense of fire discipline must be the foundation of the preparation of troops for mountain warfare.

Nothing has, in the past, encouraged the Pathan more than indiscriminate or wild firing, both by day and by night on the part of the troops. In 1919-20 this still held good, for the tribesman still made the same close study of the weaknesses of his opponent in order to elaborate his next attack. Indifferent or wild firing is the surest means of convincing him that he is opposed by nervous troops with whom liberties may be taken. There exist other reasons for the need of the cultivation of this fire discipline. In the first place, the individual soldier can carry only a small quantity of ammunition on his person in hilly country, for, otherwise, an increase of weight will end by destroying his mobility. Secondly, there is the problem of transport to be borne in mind. The need for economy of transport in a mountain campaign was shown

to be as crucial as ever. With larger effectives and with protracted fighting the consumption of rifle ammunition in December, 1919, and January, 1920, grew disproportionately greater than it had been in previous expeditions. In addition, there was the problem of the more weighty ammunition employed by the howitzer. Now, faulty infantry tactics may compel artillery to resort to an excessive outlay of ammunition in order to retrieve a situation jeopardized by the foot-soldier's own fault. Unnecessary expenditure of ammunition will, under such conditions, become more than a serious drain: it may amount to a military crime. Yet this was what happened during the last fortnight of December in the vicinity of Palosina Camp. Fortunately the short distance from Tank to Palosina rendered such expenditure more easily replaceable.

**The Pathan always exploits an enemy's mistakes.**—The quickness with which the tribesmen will realise an enemy's disadvantage or omission of precautions was as great as ever. They study their antagonist closely; they will watch him even for days, if need be, until they imagine they have found the weak spot. In the first engagement of the campaign the troops when at Jandola had already betrayed a total ignorance of the elementary peculiarities of Mahsud warfare and of the employment by the tribesmen of unscrupulous artifices calculated to gain a tactical advantage. The Mahsuds went on to exploit their superiority on Mandanna Hill. A small party of Mahsuds succeeded, only two days later, in finding a chance opening in order to attack and overwhelm the piquet surprised on that spot. This faculty of observing his enemy, common to all Pathan mountaineers, calls for considerable watchfulness, no less than skill, in varying the daily routine of an invader's troops chiefly

with regard to details of protection. To defeat his natural cunning, it is necessary to resort to somewhat analogous modes of work. For instance, the number of camp piquets and outposts put out as a matter of routine requires to be varied in an irregular fashion. Patrols and sentries should never be allowed to acquire fixed habits. With convoys the same process must be followed; the composition of escorts, and the system adopted for the protection of convoys, must be varied in the use of cavalry, infantry piquets, Ford vans provided with Lewis guns, or armoured cars. In the latter stages of the campaign of 1920 the troops on the Line of Communication began to develop a praiseworthy ability in this class of work. It became a practice with piquets and escorts to attempt to render themselves more formidable by resorting to ambushes and to a variety of artifices, whereby they might now and again surprise the tribesmen. This practice proved of considerable benefit.

**The need of surprise.**—Surprise, in a word, remains the most potent weapon wherewith to attack the uncivilized combatant. Throughout the advance of the column on Makin, from the moment it left Kotkai, the element of surprise was sedulously sought in all movements. Hence, the night marches by which the Ahnai Tangi was forced; the similar manœuvre which led to the capture of "The Barrier," or to the evacuation of Tauda China Camp. But the most convincing instance of the value of surprise may be found in the night march of the Striking Force on Aka Khel on 1st February. That success was instant and led to the total demoralization of the very large *lashkars*, assembled to witness the Afghan artillery in action. Nothing could have been more conducive to decisive results, and made greater amends for the many weaknesses exhibited by the troops, than these enterprises.

Once the tribesman's confidence was shaken, once he was made to feel the superiority of the regular soldier, his resistance broke down. But even this is not sufficient; to complete his demoralization he should be followed up and given no respite.

**Night marches.**—The night march was, in fact, one of the features of this campaign and thus deserves further remark. After the success of the first night march on the 11th January, which led to the capture of the Ahnai Tangi, the manœuvre was frequently repeated. The advantages of such a march are the following :—

- (i) Surprise could be achieved, since the Mahsud, not being broken to a full control of his actions and movements, seldom maintained any adequate system of protection at night, especially in cold weather.
- (ii) He was handicapped in his skill with the rifle; moreover, if he resorted to fire by night, he thereby disclosed his position and numbers.
- (iii) Since he did not always occupy his battle position at night, it would be possible to seize much dangerous ground whilst it was still unoccupied.

The night marches carried out during this campaign, though leading across difficult ground, were relatively short, rarely exceeding 2 miles in length. They would, therefore, be conducted over routes which had, to some extent, been reconnoitred beforehand. On one occasion, when this was not the case, namely, at Tauda China Camp on 19th February, the piquet of the 4/3rd Gurkhas lost its way, and at daybreak found itself in occupation of the wrong feature of ground. But it must not be imagined that night marches can always be carried out in frontier warfare, either with absolute confidence or over

any great distance. A commander might hesitate to do so, except under favourable circumstances. There must always be a certain element of risk inseparable from such operations. Much hangs on the probability of finding the tribesmen absent from the objective of the march or lax in their vigilance at night ; this condition, again, largely depends on the time of year, the nature of the season and on the weather. In the summer the tribesmen may be found sleeping out ; at that period night operations might thus lead to a very different issue. Provided a well-marked superiority rests with the regular soldier in the province both of tactics and of armament, the necessity for the expedient is not so apparent. But if that superiority for any reason tends to diminish unduly, or if there appears any prospect of the troops incurring heavy casualties, circumstances may urge the adoption of night movements.

Such was the case in Waziristan where the problem was radically altered and the night march proved a most valuable expedient. It is under such circumstances that the regular soldier, relying on his better discipline and on his ability to march in formation at night, even over rough ground, can resort to measures that will neutralize any advantages that may otherwise and at other moments be possessed by the enemy. So in this campaign the tribesmen were distinctly surprised by these night marches, more particularly after the first actions had disclosed to them the rawness of the troops. Notwithstanding the novelty, there is ground for the belief that towards the end of the campaign the Mahsuds were growing familiar with the invader's methods. This is shown by the fact that the withdrawal of distant piquets, as, for instance, on the retirement of the troops from Makin, was not carried out without difficulty during the later stages of the fighting. It is possible, moreover, that in future the tribesmen

may themselves attempt to move about the country regularly by night.

**The retirement remains a difficult operation.**—This campaign again showed that the withdrawal of troops in face of the enemy was fraught with the same difficulty as before. Any movement of that nature seems to furnish an irresistible stimulus for the tribesmen to rally and to launch a reckless attack against retreating troops. Their onslaught may easily become very dangerous if the rear-guard be hurried back too fast or without foresight, since the prospect of collecting loot, or the exasperation caused by devastation of property, may nerve the Pathan to an unexpected degree of recklessness. Most of the earlier fighting of the Waziristan Force invariably seemed to centre round the operation of withdrawing troops that had been covering the construction of fortified posts. The fighting on Tarakai Hill on 21st December, on Sarkai Ghar on 23rd and 24th January, are adequate illustrations of the problem which may then arise. Careful preparations to cover every such withdrawal are essential. Artillery requires to be duly warned in advance to protect the movement by shell fire, while an overhead aeroplane patrol is now essential. Instances where the 2·75 guns intervened with signal success in such a movement are to be found in the actions on Sarkai Ghar, quoted above. Where no such assistance is forthcoming, the infantry may end by finding themselves in difficulties, as happened on 2nd January to 4/39th Garhwalis on the Spin Ghara ridge above Kotkai.

**Rearguards always exposed to be cut off.**—During these early engagements, moreover, the covering troops, when the moment came to retire, often found themselves in an unenviable position, owing to the facility with which the Mahsud insinuated small parties round their flanks. The dangerous consequences of that manœuvre were fully



illustrated in these earlier engagements on Mandanna Hill and later when the Garhwalis on Spin Ghara were caught in similar fashion. Any small rearguards and isolated parties run grave risks of being cut off in these retirements. The risk is intensified either on account of the faulty handling of troops or owing to a wrong direction being taken when carrying out the movement. Examples of this risk are to be found in the withdrawal of the covering troops to Kotkai Camp on 7th January, and again during the retirement of the Gurkhas from Giga Khel on 7th April. It is permissible to suggest that pre-War frontier troops would not have been caught in such a trap. In order to cover the retirement of the whole column from Tauda China Camp no less than two battalions and one battery were detailed to cover the operation, one battalion being placed on either side of the stream. The troops in this case enjoyed the further advantage of daylight for the initiation of the operation; there was the certainty of aerial support as well as of the knowledge that the tribesmen would, according to their invariable custom, stop to loot the freshly abandoned camp. The process of breaking off an action when the troops are being closely followed up by such an enemy complicates the removal of the wounded, who might otherwise fall into the hands of the tribesmen only to be tortured or mutilated. It was this latter circumstance that jeopardized the withdrawal of the Garhwalis on 2nd January, and more than once delayed the retreat of the Gurkhas in the Makin district in February.

**The utility of the permanent piquet.**—Another noteworthy feature of the campaign was the protection of both the original advance and the Line of Communication by a complete system of permanent piquets. There were several reasons why this method of protection should

have been preferred. In the first place the column was large and would, therefore, require constant and almost daily replenishment of supplies and stores which would be brought up by the one single road. Secondly, the advance of the column was to be deliberate and might prove protracted, while the operations were designed to lead into the heart of an intensely hostile country. The protection of the Line of Communication would therefore constitute a perpetual source of anxiety. Thirdly, the inexperience of the troops demanded the adoption of extreme measures of precaution, together with the greatest avoidance of risk. The decision to adopt the permanent piquet certainly justified itself, if only on the score of expediting the work of supply, since delays accruing to convoys on the route were almost unknown, while the total loss in transport animals engaged on this route did not exceed thirty.

The defensible posts in which the piquets were accommodated were sited on commanding ground at an approximate distance of half a mile apart and on either side of the valley, as circumstances demanded. They were strengthened by all available means, strongly traversed and finally surrounded with a strong barbed wire entanglement. The garrison of the post might at first have amounted to half a company of infantry, but this number would be diminished as rapidly as improvements in the construction of the work would allow. The posts were also supplied with grenades and a Lewis gun or two, but only exceptionally were they armed with a Stokes' mortar or a mountain gun. The latter natures of armament were virtually reserved for the posts situated nearer or on the plains. As time went on, the construction of the posts improved greatly; they were more cunningly built, and were camouflaged as far as possible; they were designed mainly

for flanking fire, and, lastly, were wired overhead to guard against bombing attack. A brigade of infantry might, under favourable conditions, become responsible for the manning of some thirty or so of these posts, situated over a section of the Line of Communication in length of 12 to 16 miles, according to the ground. The relief and support of the piquets, in case of attack, was carried out by this brigade, its Headquarters and remaining troops being stationed in a permanent camp, situated on the section thus defended. In certain cases a section of mountain guns might be allotted to the supporting troops in order to deal with any heavier attacks that might be made on posts in that section.

The advantages of a system of permanent piquets are the following :—

- (i) A more rapid and frequent service of convoys can be kept up.
- (ii) A decreased strain is imposed on the protecting troops in view of the greater freedom of movement along the line thus protected, and the discontinuance of perpetual climbing uphill for the purpose of posting temporary piquets.
- (iii) An eventual saving in troops, if convoys are either long or frequent.
- (iv) The piquets form a complete cordon, cutting the hostile country in two, passage from one side to the other being possible for the tribesmen only by night.

On the other hand, permanent piquets must maintain a high degree of vigilance, since any laxness in the performance of their monotonous duties might lead to disaster overtaking a convoy moving along the road below. Should any tendency be observed among the enemy to become

active along the Line of Communication, the supporting troops should be ordered to resort to all possible methods of active defence in conjunction with the piquets, such as ambuscades, sweeping patrols, booby traps. It has also been objected that the system of permanent piquets possesses one great disadvantage, namely, that of absorbing much time in the construction of the posts. Yet it is difficult to see how, in face of the determination evinced by the Mahsud at the outbreak of the fighting, any more expeditious method could have been adopted for covering the advance, since the column required every possible form of support ; and what better form of protection could be provided for troops that had not yet proved their ability to cope with the peculiarities of mountain warfare ? It should not be imagined, however, that the same procedure would prove of equal benefit in a case where the convoys might be of lesser frequency, or the road protected by these means less exposed to raid, or the invading column numerically weak, or, lastly, in the case of the invader possessing a great superiority in fighting qualities. In such an event the system of permanent piquets could turn out to be a source of wasteful expenditure of troops and of energy. In addition the system might cramp the mobility of the invader. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the Mahsuds did not, during the actual campaign, concentrate their activities against the piquets or the convoys moving along the Tank Zam Valley. That was a phase of their hostility that developed long after the true expedition. Consequently, the permanent piquets were not severely tried during the actual advance of the column.

**The campaign of 1919-20 abnormal.**—In conclusion, it might be as well to repeat the gist of the words of the Commander-in-Chief in India, already quoted in Chapter I,

namely, that this campaign of 1919-20 in Waziristan was of a truly abnormal nature. The military and political conditions prevalent in India, the demobilization of troops, the general war weariness, the rawness of half-trained units, the unsatisfactory position of the army during the hot and literally pestilential summer following the complete collapse of the Afghan attack of the preceding May, all these circumstances conspired to render the task of the Waziristan Force formidable beyond expectation. The first days of war had found the Mahsuds in a state of elation and of determination hitherto unknown on the Frontier. Their armament had improved, their supply of ammunition was large, while their tactical conceptions had made enormous strides. On the other side, there were manifest symptoms of what might have been termed an incipient military decadence. But much has happened since, and this has been proved by the experience of 1923. It may thus be asserted with all confidence that the pendulum has now swung far the other way. A repetition of the experiences of 1919-20 in Waziristan is scarcely likely to recur. For this reason alone the bulk of the lessons of this campaign should be regarded as very far from being conclusive, much less a final word in the matter of warfare on the North-West Frontier of India.

## APPENDIX I

### THE TERMS OFFERED TO TOCHI WAZIRS AND MAHSUDS

The terms first stated that there was no truth in the rumour that their country would be handed over to the Amir of Afghanistan, and then demanded that the tribes should agree to the following conditions :—

- (a) The British Government was to have the right to make roads, build posts and station troops wherever it should deem necessary or desirable in any part of the " Protected Areas."\*
- (b) All rifles, ammunition, bombs and other military equipment taken since May 1st, 1919, were to be returned.
- (c) The tribes were not to interfere with the movement of troops or convoys in their country, nor to molest aeroplanes or their occupants when flying over their country.
- (d) All unpaid allowances were to be forfeited. No allowances were to be granted until the British Government was satisfied with the good behaviour of the tribes.
- (e) Each tribe was to deposit as a guarantee of good faith 200 rifles, which would be returned within a period of twelve months, subject to the continued behaviour of the tribes.
- (f) The Tochi Wazirs were to pay a fine of Rs.50,000 and the Mahsuds Rs.10,000.

Extracted from the Second Supplement to the " London Gazette " of 7th December, 1920.

\* Protected Areas—Certain portions of the country to be administered by our political officers; these were chiefly a belt of territory along the east and south of the Mahsud country

## APPENDIX II

### ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE DERAJAT COLUMN, 1919-20

#### *Commander*

Major-General A. Skeen, C.M.G.  
Column Headquarters

#### *Cavalry*

1 Squadron (less one troop), 21st P.A.V.O. Cavalry (for advance as far as Kotkai only).

#### *Artillery*

No. 6 Mountain Battery, R.G.A.  
No. 27 Indian Mountain Battery.  
No. 35 Indian Mountain Battery (joined L. of C. defences during advance of Derajat Column).  
Divisional Ammunition Column.

#### *Sappers and Miners*

55th Field Company.  
1 Survey Section.  
No. 4 Photo Section.

#### *Signal Units*

38th Divisional Signal Company, H.Q. Section.  
No. 16 Pack Wireless Station.

#### *Infantry*

43rd Brigade (Commander—Brigadier-General G. Gwyn-Thomas, C.M.G., D.S.O.).  
Brigade Signal Section.

4/39th Garhwal Rifles.

57th Wilde's Rifles.

82nd Punjabis.

2/152nd Punjabis.

67th Brigade (Commander—Brigadier-General F. G. Lucas, C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O.).

Brigade Signal Section.

1/55th Coke's Rifles.

1/103rd Mahratta Light Infantry.

104th Wellesley's Rifles (relieved by 109th Infantry from 68th Brigade in Derajat Column).

2/112th Infantry.

#### *Pioneers*

3/34th Sikh Pioneers.

2/61st Pioneers (remained on L. of C. after Derajat Column reached Kotkai).

#### *Militia*

Southern Waziristan Militia (100 Infantry Scouts).

*Note.*—The 2/19th Punjabis, 82nd Punjabis, 1/103rd Mahratta Light Infantry, 2/112th Infantry were transferred to the L. of C. during the latter part of December. They were, later on in the operations, replaced in the Force (with the exception of the 2/19th Punjabis, who came from the 68th Brigade and were only with the Derajat Column for five days) by the following battalions, who joined the Column on the dates shown. 2/5th Gurkha Rifles 5th January, 2/9th Gurkha Rifles 10th January, 4/3rd Gurkha Rifles 12th February and 3/11th Gurkha Rifles 16th February, 1920.

The 3/11th Gurkha Rifles became column troops, while the remaining Gurkha regiments joined the 67th Brigade.

Extracted from "Official Account of the Waziristan Operations."



### APPENDIX III

#### CASUALTIES OF THE DERAJAT COLUMN

*From 11th December, 1919, to 8th April, 1920*

	Killed.	Missing.	Wounded.	Total.
British officers . .	28	1	40	69
British other ranks . .	—	—	1	1
Indian officers . .	15	4	68	87
Indian other ranks . .	323	232	1,574	2,129
Total . .	366	237	1,683	2,286

Extracted from " Official Account of the Waziristan Operations."

## APPENDIX IV

### ORDER OF BATTLE OF WANA COLUMN, 1920

#### *Headquarters*

Wana Column.

#### *Artillery*

Headquarters, Divisional Artillery.

No. 6 Pack Battery, British (four 3·7-inch Howitzers).

No. 35 Pack Battery, Indian (four 2·75-inch guns).

Brigade Ammunition Column (from Waziristan Force).

Ammunition Pack (from Waziristan Force).

Ammunition Refilling Point.

#### *Engineers*

Headquarters, Divisional Engineers.

No. 14 Field Company, 2nd Sappers and Miners.

No. 3 Photo Litho Section, 2nd Sappers and Miners.

48th Pioneers.

2/61st Pioneers.

Advanced Engineer Park (from Waziristan Force).

#### *Signal Units*

Detachment "F" Divisional Signals.

No. 1 Brigade Pack Cable Section, "F" Divisional Signals.

No. 3 Brigade Section, "F" Divisional Signals.

1 Mountain Artillery Brigade Signal Section.

No. 1 Troop, No. 3 Wireless Squadron.

*Militia*

Detachment, South Waziristan Militia. Infantry and Mounted Infantry.

*Machine Guns*

1 Company, 11th Machine Gun Battalion.

*Royal Air Force*

No. 20 Squadron (Bristol Fighters).  
Wireless Section, R.A.F.

Extracted from Second Supplement to the "London Gazette," 25th April, 1922.





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